Student Engagement of
New Freshmen and Transfer Students

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is based on the rationale that student engagement can serve as a proxy for student learning and personal development. The survey was created to assess the extent to which a university's practices, investments, and environment encourage undergraduate students to take full advantage of institutional opportunities and resources that lead to positive student outcomes such as student satisfaction, persistence, and graduation. The survey is administered to freshmen and seniors only.

From responses to various questions on the NSSE, five NSSE benchmark indices of effective educational practice are calculated[1] (benchmarks are on a scale from 0 to 100). This report looks at Loyola's 2005-09 NSSE benchmarks, comparing Loyola seniors who had entered as new freshmen with those who had entered as transfer students.[2]

Key findings

Level of Academic Challenge

- Level of Academic Challenge (LAC) is an indicator of the extent to which Loyola emphasizes the importance of academic effort and sets high academic expectations.

- In almost all years, the LAC benchmark was virtually the same for seniors who had entered Loyola as transfer students as for those who had entered as new freshmen (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- With the exception of 2006, when the transfer benchmark dipped to 56, the benchmark for both groups of students hovered just at or below 60.

Active and Collaborative Learning

- Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL) indicates the degree to which students are active in class and collaborate with others in solving

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[1] See Appendix A for specific questions included in each benchmark
[2] See Appendix B for number of respondents by year, as well as response rates.

problems or mastering difficult material.

- In all years, the ACL benchmark was a little higher for seniors who had entered as new freshmen, compared to those who had entered as transfer students (see Figure 2). In most years, however, the difference was very slight.

- The new freshman benchmark stayed almost the same from 2005 to 2009, ranging from 48.3 to 51.8.

- The transfer student benchmark dropped from 48.9 in 2005 to 44.9 in 2007, then rose to 50.1 by 2009.

Student-Faculty Interaction

- Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI) measures the degree to which students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems, by interacting with faculty both in and out of the classroom.

- In all years, the SFI benchmark for those seniors who had entered as new freshmen was at least slightly higher than that of those who had transferred to Loyola, but the difference was quite small by 2009 (see Figure 3).

- The new freshman SFI benchmark started at 49.2. From 2005 to 2007, the benchmark dropped a little to 46.7, but then recovered, reaching 39.9 by 2009.

- The transfer student SFI benchmark dropped from 46.9 in 2005 to 41.4 in 2006, but then recovered, reaching 47.6 in 2009.

Enriching Educational Experiences

- Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE) indicates participation in complementary learning opportunities to enhance students' academic programs, including experience of diversity and involvement in a variety of both academic and non-academic activities.

- Throughout the entire 2005 to 2009 period, the EEE benchmark was substantially higher for seniors who had entered as new freshmen, compared to those who had entered as transfer students (see Figure 4). The gap ranged from 7.2 points to 12.3 points.

- The new freshman EEE benchmark rose only

slightly, from 46.9 in 2005 to 50.2 in 2009.

- The transfer student EEE benchmark dropped from 38.8 in 2005 to 35.1 in 2006, but then more than recovered, reaching 41.9 in 2009.
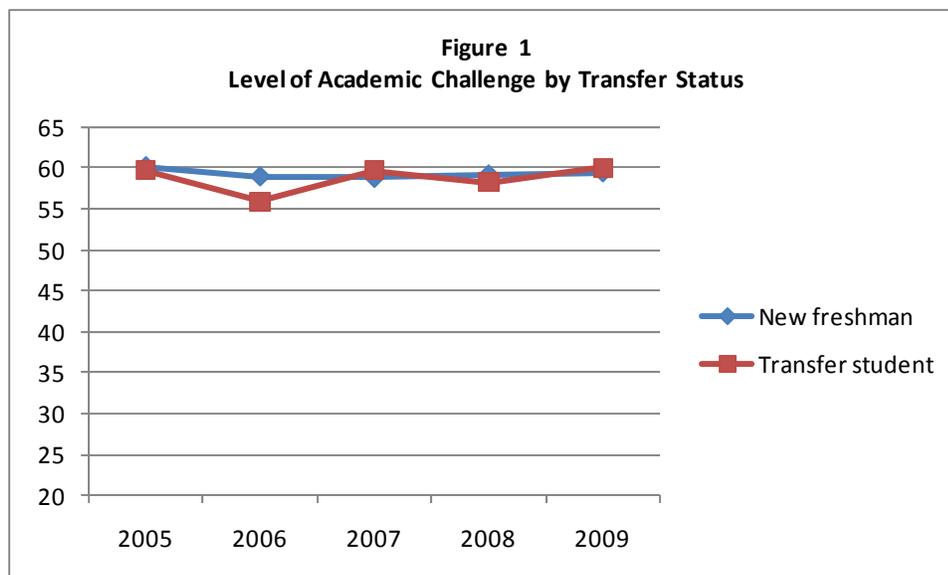
Supportive Campus Environment

- Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) indicates the degree to which students feel supported by the university in both academic and non-academic areas, and the quality of students' relationships with other students, faculty members, and administrative personnel.

- The SCE benchmark was at least as high for seniors who had transferred to Loyola as for those who had entered as new freshmen, in four out of the five years (see Figure 5).

- Differences between the two groups, however, were not large enough to be substantively meaningful.

- In 2005, the SCE benchmarks were 53.8 and 56.0 for new freshmen and transfer students, respectively; by 2009 those benchmarks were 55.7 and 57.1.
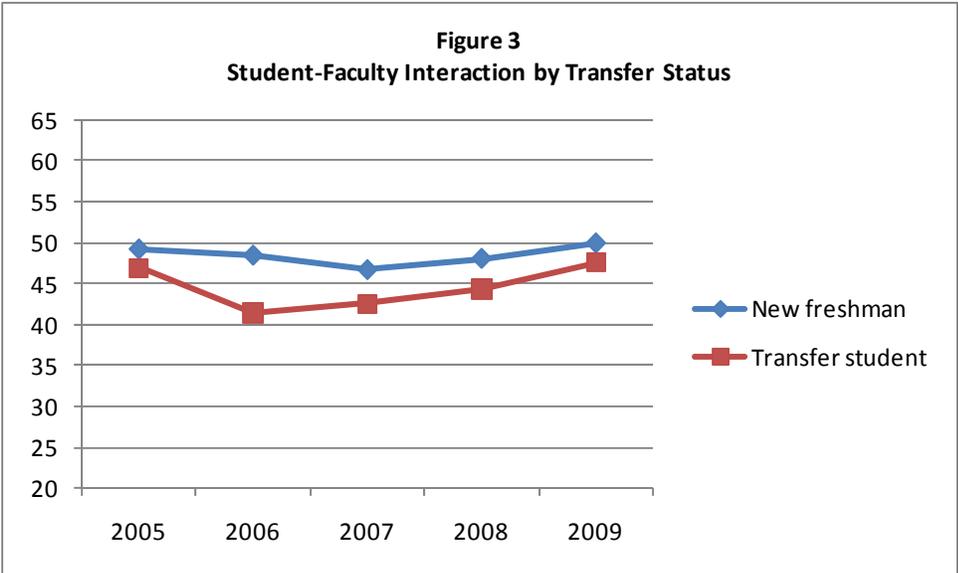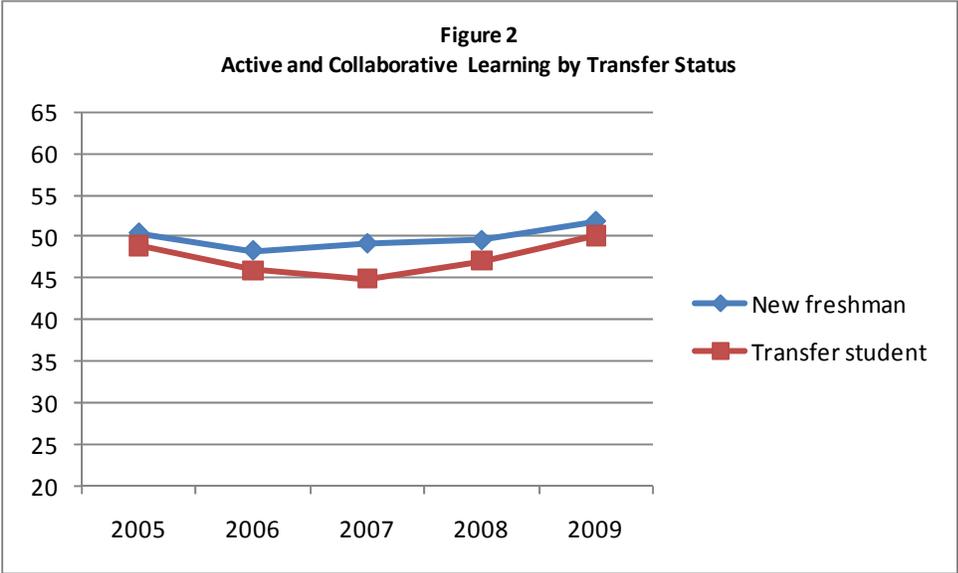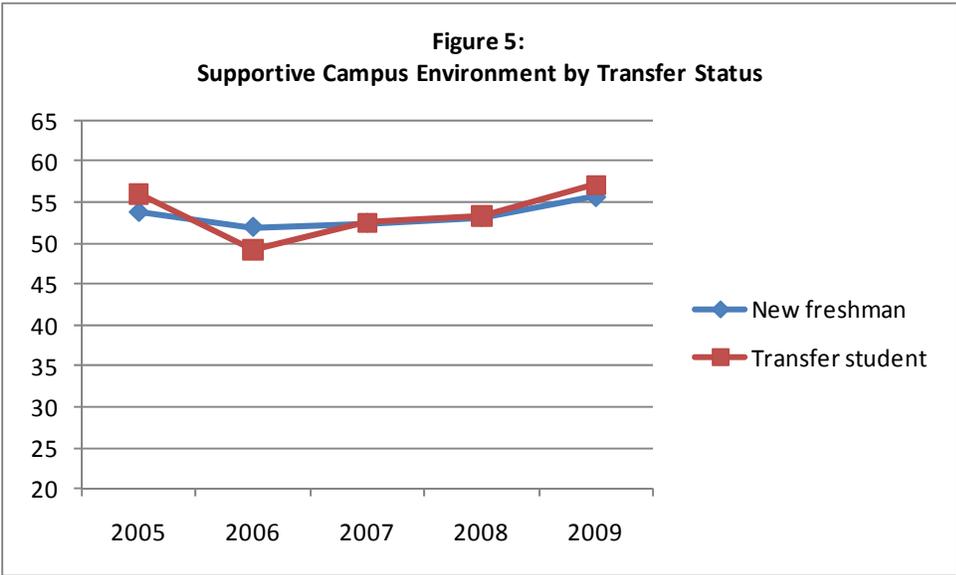
Conclusions

- Seniors who had entered as new freshmen and those who had entered as transfer students reported the same level of **academic challenge** at Loyola.

- Seniors who had entered as new freshmen had reported doing only slightly more **active and collaborative learning** than had transfer students.

- Seniors who had entered as new freshmen reported only slightly more **interaction with faculty** than did transfer students.

- Seniors who had entered as new freshmen reported having had substantially more **enriching educational experiences** than did transfer students.

- Transfer students reported just as **supportive** a **campus environment** as did those who had entered as freshmen.

Table 1 NSSE Benchmarks of Student Engagement, by Year and Entry Status					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Level of Academic Challenge					
New freshman	60.2	59.0	58.8	59.2	59.5
Transfer student	59.7	55.9	59.7	58.2	60.1
Active and Collaborative Learning					
New freshman	50.4	48.3	49.1	49.5	51.8
Transfer student	48.9	46.0	44.9	47.1	50.1
Student-Faculty Interaction					
New freshman	49.2	48.4	46.7	48.1	49.9
Transfer student	46.9	41.4	42.6	44.3	47.6
Enriching Educational Experiences					
New freshman	46.9	47.4	46.4	47.5	50.2
Transfer student	38.8	35.1	38.0	40.3	41.9
Supportive Campus Environment					
New freshman	53.8	51.9	52.4	53.1	55.7
Transfer student	56.0	49.2	52.5	53.3	57.1

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2005-09

Figure 1
Level of Academic Challenge by Transfer Status

Figure 2
Active and Collaborative Learning by Transfer Status

Figure 3
Student-Faculty Interaction by Transfer Status

Figure 4
Enriching Educational Experiences by Transfer Status

Figure 5:
Supportive Campus Environment by Transfer Status
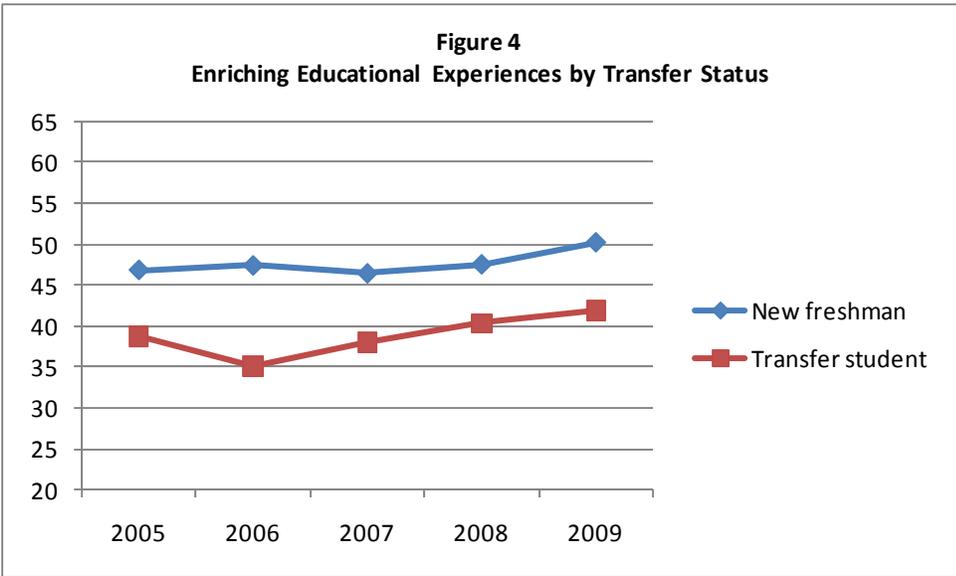
APPENDIX A
Benchmark definitions and items included

Level of Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, etc. related to academic program)
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more; number of written papers or reports of between 5 and 19 pages; and   number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: **Analysis** of the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: **Synthesis** and organizing of ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations   and relationships
- Coursework emphasizes: **Making of judgments** about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: **Applying** theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Working harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Campus environment emphasizes: Spending significant amount of time studying and on academic work.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.

- Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- Made a class presentation
- Worked with other students on projects **during class**
- Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments
- Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Student-Faculty Interaction

Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.

- Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.)
- Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements

Enriching Educational Experiences

Complementary learning opportunities enhance academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.

- Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, social fraternity or sorority, etc.)
- Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment
- Community service or volunteer work
- Foreign language coursework / Study abroad
- Independent study or self-designed major
- Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)
- Serious conversations with students of different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values
- Serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own
- Using electronic medium (e.g., listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment
- Campus environment encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together

Supportive Campus Environment

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

- Campus environment provides the support you need to help you succeed academically
- Campus environment helps you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- Campus environment provides the support you need to thrive socially
- Quality of relationships with other students
- Quality of relationships with faculty members
- Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices

Appendix B Respondents and Response Rates, by Year and Entry Status									
	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
New freshman	63.4	90	69.6	307	71.0	382	69.1	508	72.3	457
Transfer student	36.6	52	30.4	134	29.0	156	30.9	227	27.7	175
Response rate	44%		39%		33%		46%		35%	

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2005-09.