

The University of Texas Pan American

**National Study of Student Engagement
The College Student Report**

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The University of Texas-Pan American

**National Study of Study Engagement
The College Student Report**

**Submitted to
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National Study of Student Engagement

Executive Summary

The National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) project was developed to address the need of universities and colleges to strengthen their responsibility in providing meaningful quality improvement, especially in enhancing undergraduate education. Thus, the project was designed to seek information from undergraduates directly about their educational experiences in order to provide colleges and universities with results about institutional quality based on more valuable information than current resource and reputation measures.

The survey instrument designed for this purpose was *The College Student Report*. Its aim was to gather essential details about the extent to which students participate in the educational process; i.e., students' views of collegiate quality. The content of the survey instrument was firmly based on the body of research that relates particular classroom activities and specific faculty and peer practices to high quality undergraduate student outcomes.

Students from 276 colleges and universities participated in the study. The participants were randomly selected, by NSSE, from a population which included first year students who began baccalaureate study in the summer or fall of 1999 and attended classes for at least one semester/quarter and seniors who were on schedule to graduate in spring or summer 2000. By deliberately selecting students at these levels, inferences can be drawn about the contrasts between the responses of "survivors" and "drop outs" (e.g., according to retention research, in general, survivors have had more successful experiences than dropouts at any given institution).

The UTPA sample size consisted of 700 students of which 113 1st year and 121 seniors responded to the survey or a 34% response rate. At the national level, 42% (63,383) of 151,910 students completed the survey instrument; 49% were in their first-year of college and 51% were seniors.

The respondents were categorized, for comparative purposes, by college or university based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. UTPA's comparison group is the Master's Universities and Colleges, Levels 1 and 2. In addition to Pan American, 5 UT System components (Brownsville, El Paso, San Antonio, Tyler and Permian Basin) were included with this group, together with 4 other Texas universities (Abilene Christian University, Our Lady of the Lake, Southwest Texas State University and St. Edwards University). Approximately eighty-three (83) out-of state universities were also made part of this comparison group (**note**: abbreviated as comp.grp. in figures and tables throughout this report).

Student Profile

Gender/Ethnicity/Age: As might be expected, the profile of the respondents shows there were differences between the UTPA population and those of the NSSE institutions.

- With respect to gender, at the senior level 60% (UTPA) and 66.3% (national) were women; and, representation at the freshman level was almost equal to that of the national sample (66.7% and 66.9%, respectively, were women).
- The majority of UTPA respondents were Hispanic (88%); compared to the national sample of 6.4%.
- Although 1st year respondents were similar in age, approximately 82% of the UTPA and national groups were 19 years of age or younger; at the senior level there were major differences.
 - About 62% of the UTPA seniors were over 24 years of age compared to the national sample of 26.9% in this range.
 - Moreover, 24.8% and 10%, respectively, were between 30 and 39 years of age.

Residence: The UTPA respondents reflected the commuter campus status of the institution: 93.4% of UTPA respondents compared to 56.3% of the NSSE group lived within driving distance to their institution. Of this group, however, the following reflects major differences:

- 86.7% of 1st year UTPA students and 24.8% nationally lived with family members.
- Of the seniors, 86% (UTPA) compared to 38.4% (NSSE national) lived with family members.

Enrollment Status: There were differences in response rates in enrollment status, at the time the survey was completed, between students from UTPA and the national sample

- 19.5% and 7.6%, respectively, of 1st year students attended part-time;
- 30% and 20.2%%, respectively, of seniors attended part-time.

College Attendance: The survey responses revealed the following:

- 96.5% of 1st year students began college at UTPA compared to 92% at the national level that began at their current college. Thus, 3.5% of UTPA freshmen began college at another institution, but 13.3% had attended another college at sometime in the past.
- 65.3% (UTPA) and 59.6% (National) of the seniors began college at the institution in which they were enrolled at the time they completed the survey; however, 29.8% and 45.7%, respectively, had attended **only** the one in which they were currently enrolled.

Major Field of Study: The top five (5) majors for both 1st year and senior UTPA students were the following: Health-related, Education, Business, Computer Information and Social Sciences. Four of these majors were in the top five at the national level; instead of Computer Information, Biology was listed as one of the most popular majors.

The College Student Report Results of the Survey

College Activities: The majority of the questions in this section were designated as good educational practices; that is, research has shown they are positively correlated with many desired outcomes of college. There were twenty (20) items within this particular section, but nine (9) showed significant differences in responses ($p < 0.001$ level)* between UTPA 1st year and senior participants and those of the comparable universities and the national sample.

Figure 1a (1st Year Students) and Figure 1b (Seniors) show differences in the response rates between the UTPA students and those from the comparable university group and the NSSE national sample.

Specifically, the UTPA students were less inclined to respond positively to the following:

- Ask questions in class or contribute to class discussion (CLQUEST)
- Make a class presentation (CLPRESEN)
- Use e-mail to communicate with an instructor or other students (EMAIL)
- Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (OCCGRP)

They were also less likely than respondents from the national groups to have

- talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (FACPLANS)
- received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance (FACFEED)
- worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (FACOTHER)
- had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from theirs (DIFFSTUD)
- had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own (DIVRSTUD)

*(Note: $p < 0.001$ indicates that the difference between UTPA's mean score and the comparison group or national mean on that item would not have occurred by chance 99.9% of the time. The effect size is also given in Appendix B. This indicates the magnitude of the difference between means. It was found by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the mean of the group with which the institution is being compared [i.e., comparison group and national sample]. T-tests for both groups were conducted without UTPA data.

Figure 1a
Educational Practices Engaged In By First Year Students
(Very Often/Often)

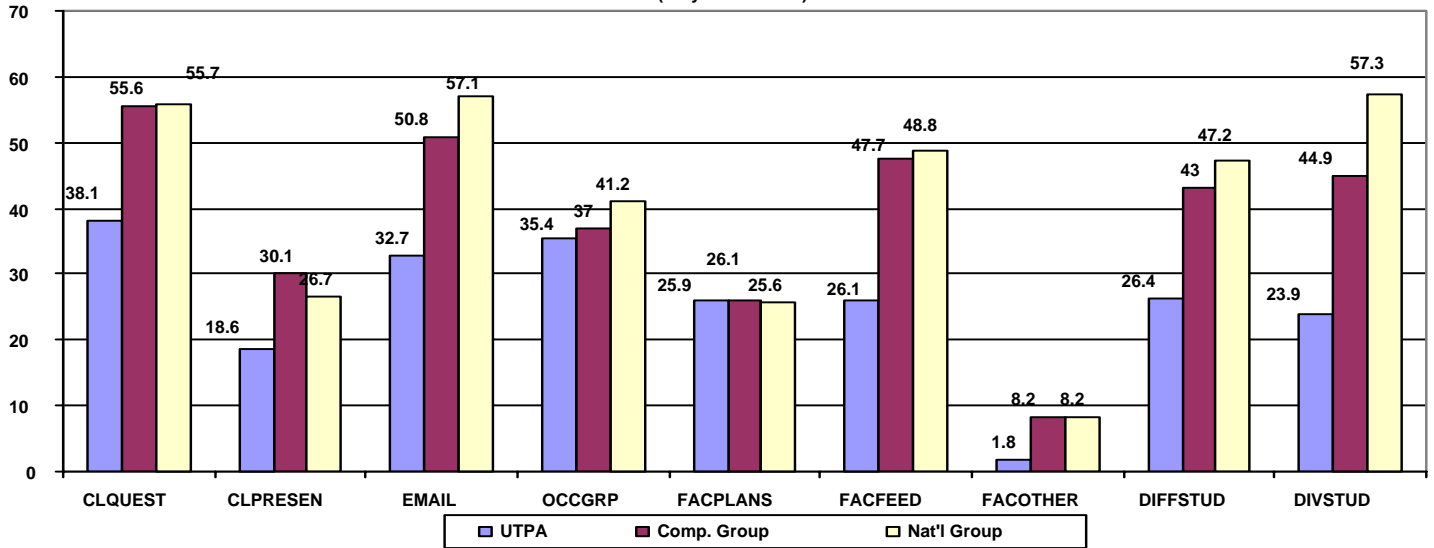
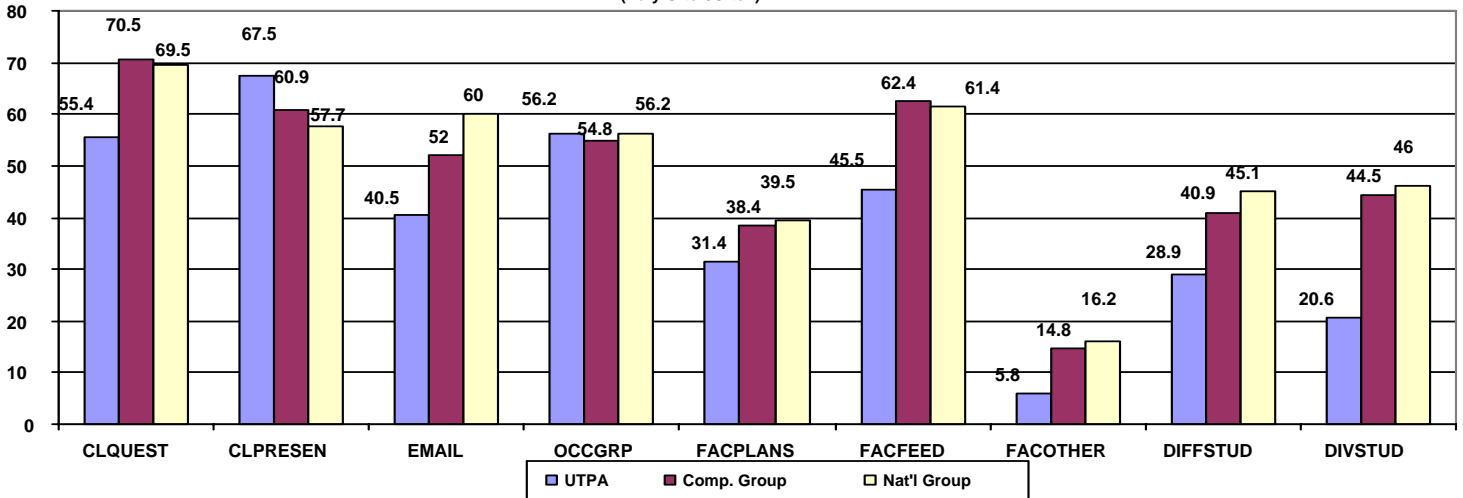


Figure 1b
Educational Practices Engaged In By Seniors
(Very Often/Often)



Reading/Writing: Another group of items within the College Activities section addresses the expectations of the institution, whether directly or indirectly, and the extent to which it challenges students to engage in behaviors that are defined as good educational practices. As shown in Figures 2a and 2b, UTPA students, compared to the national respondents, were assigned fewer textbooks, book or book-length packs of course reading and fewer papers or reports of 20 pages or more.

Figure 2a
Time Spent Reading and Writing
First Year Respondents

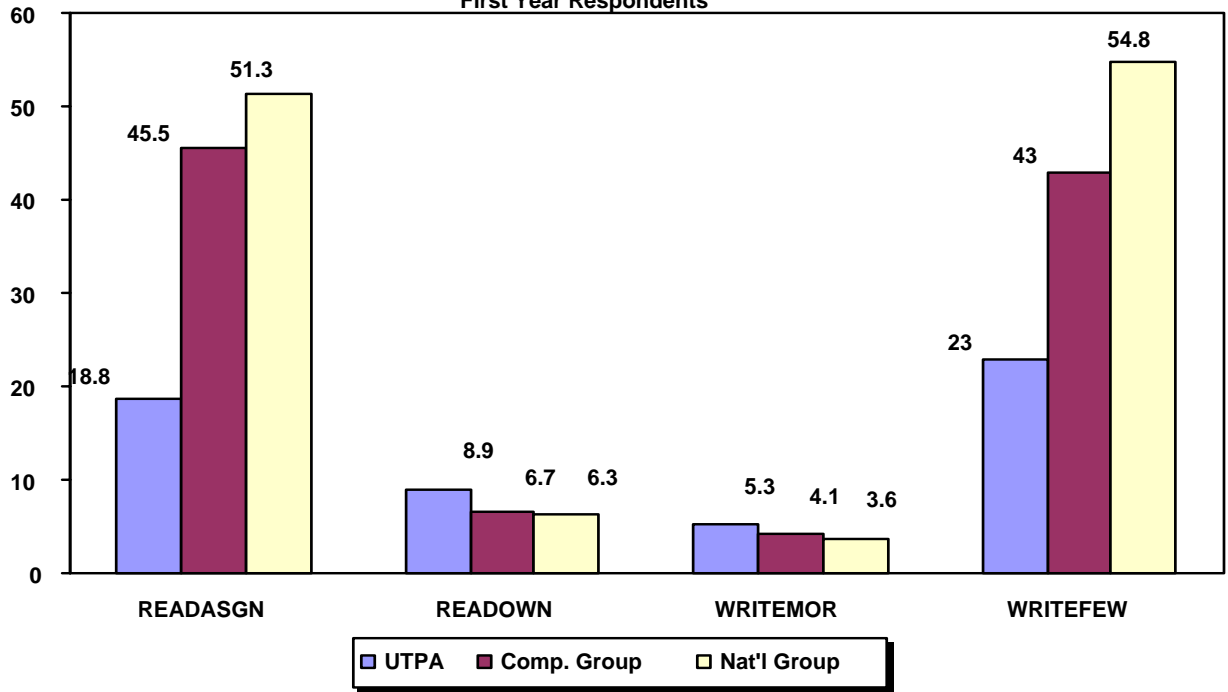
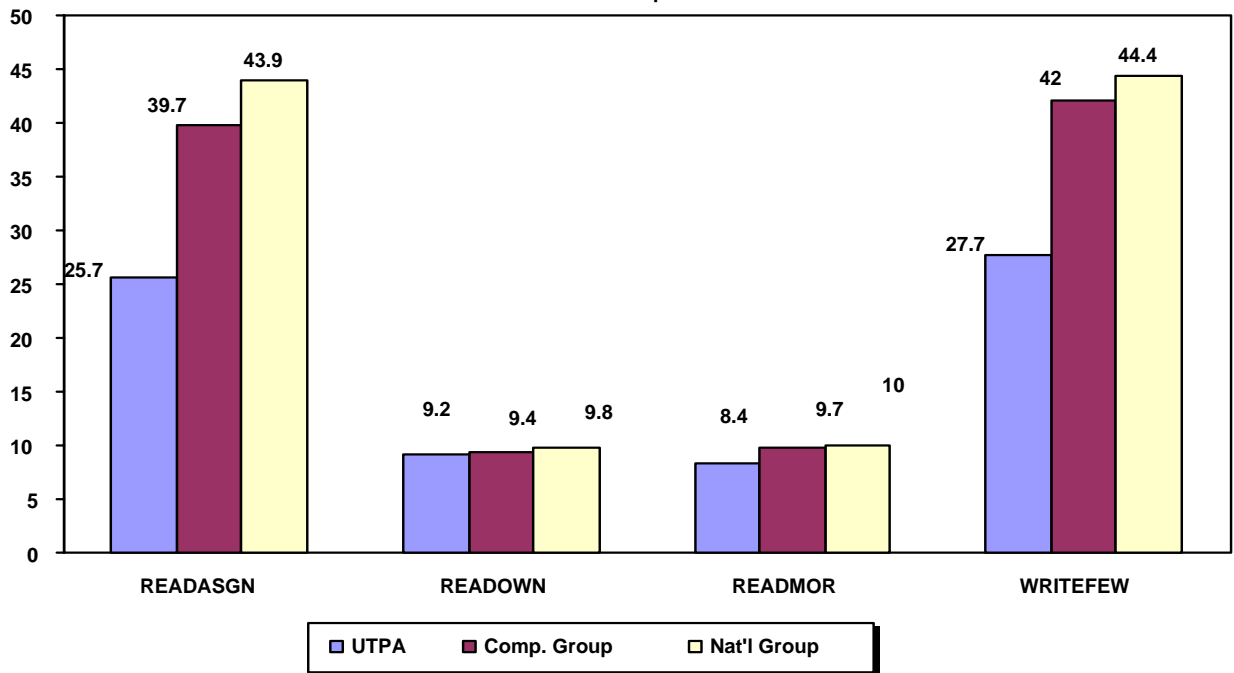


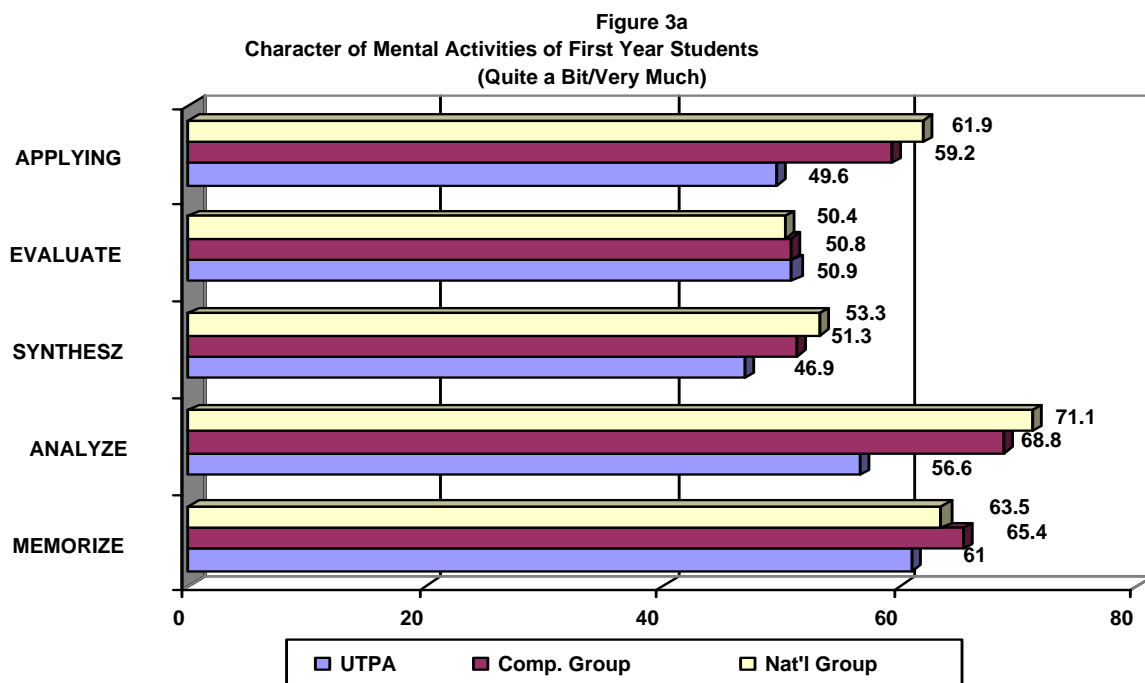
Figure 2b
Time Spent on Reading & Writing
Senior Respondents

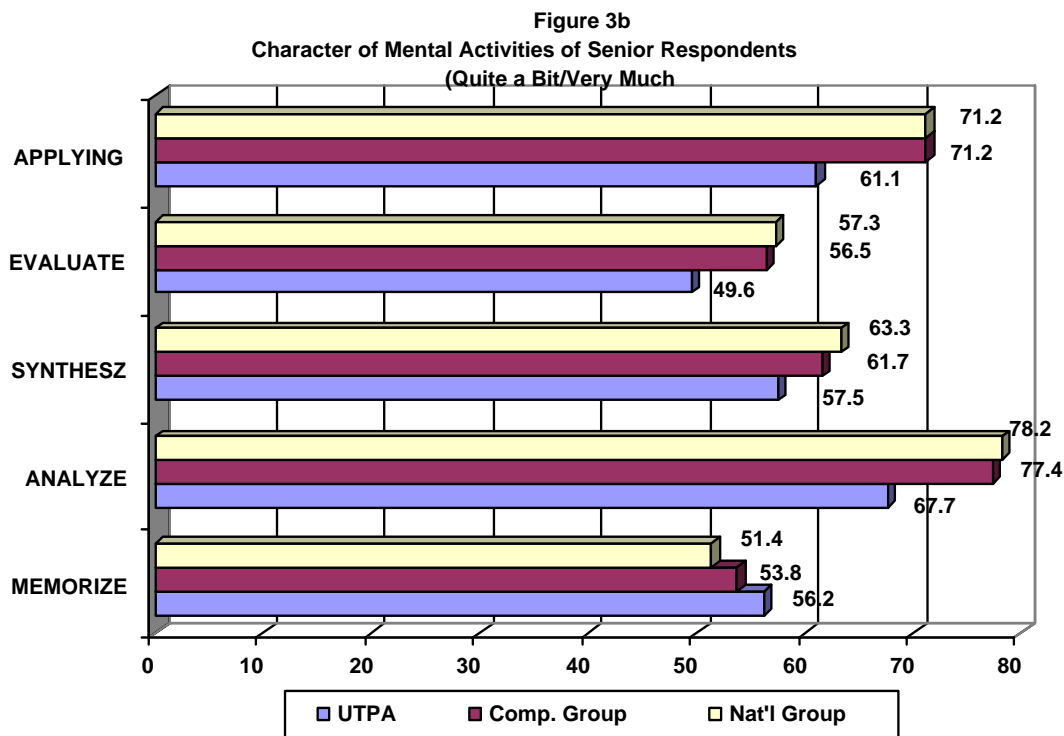


- 18.8% (UTPA) compared to 45.5% (comparable group) 1st year students were assigned 11 or more textbook of course reading;
- 25.7% and 39.7%, respectively, of the seniors were assigned more reading.
- 23% (UTPA) and 43% (comparable group) 1st year students reported having written 11 or more papers or reports of fewer than 20 pages.
- 27.7% and 42% of the seniors, respectively, were within this range
- Although UTPA responses were slightly more positive than the national group at the freshmen level, students were not likely to read books on their own.

Nature of Exams: The type of exams given to students more than likely consisted of multiple choice or short answer tests in contrast to having taken mostly essay exams or tests with open-ended question/problems. On the scale of 1 (mostly multiple choice or short answer) to 7 (mostly essay or open-ended problems), 20.8% of 1st year and 37.4% of UTPA seniors marked 5, 6 and 7. For students at comparable institutions, 23.5% and 32.6%, respectively, had responses within this range.

Mental Activities: The types of mental activities that the institution emphasizes are designed to enrich students' college experience. Based on Bloom's taxonomy (1956), some of the skills listed represent higher order intellectual and mental activities. In this regard, coursework emphasis for UTPA students, to a greater extent than the comparable university and national groups, seems to focus on the lower order skills of memorization and analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory (Figures 3a and 3b).





About 50% or less of 1st year students were asked to *synthesize* and to *organize ideas, information or experiences* (2) to *evaluate and make judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods* and (3) to *apply theories to new situations*. Even though the percentage rates of UTPA seniors were greater than UTPA 1st year students in the aforementioned items, they were, nonetheless, less likely to be asked to perform these functions than students at the national level.

Time on Task: How students spend their time in college is a key indicator of students' involvement with their education. Three items are positively correlated with educational and personal growth: time devoted to *preparing for class, extracurricular activities, and on-campus work*. According to the results, 32% of UTPA 1st year students devoted 11 hours or more hours a week in *class preparation (ACADPREP)*, but 65.8% nationally were within this range. This factor may be influenced by the amount of time devoted to *working off campus (WORKOFF)* and to *caring for dependents (CAREDEPD)* as shown in Figures 4a and 4b. (See Table 8 *Time on Task* for additional information).

UTPA students spent more time *working off-campus* (WORKOFF) and *caring for dependents* (CAREDEPD) than the national groups did.

As shown in Figure 4a, it appears that

- 52.7% of the 1st year students worked off campus for 11 or more hours a week, but at the national level 25.6% did so.
- 31.8% and 9.3%, respectively, also spent this amount of time caring for dependents (parents, children, spouse, etc.)

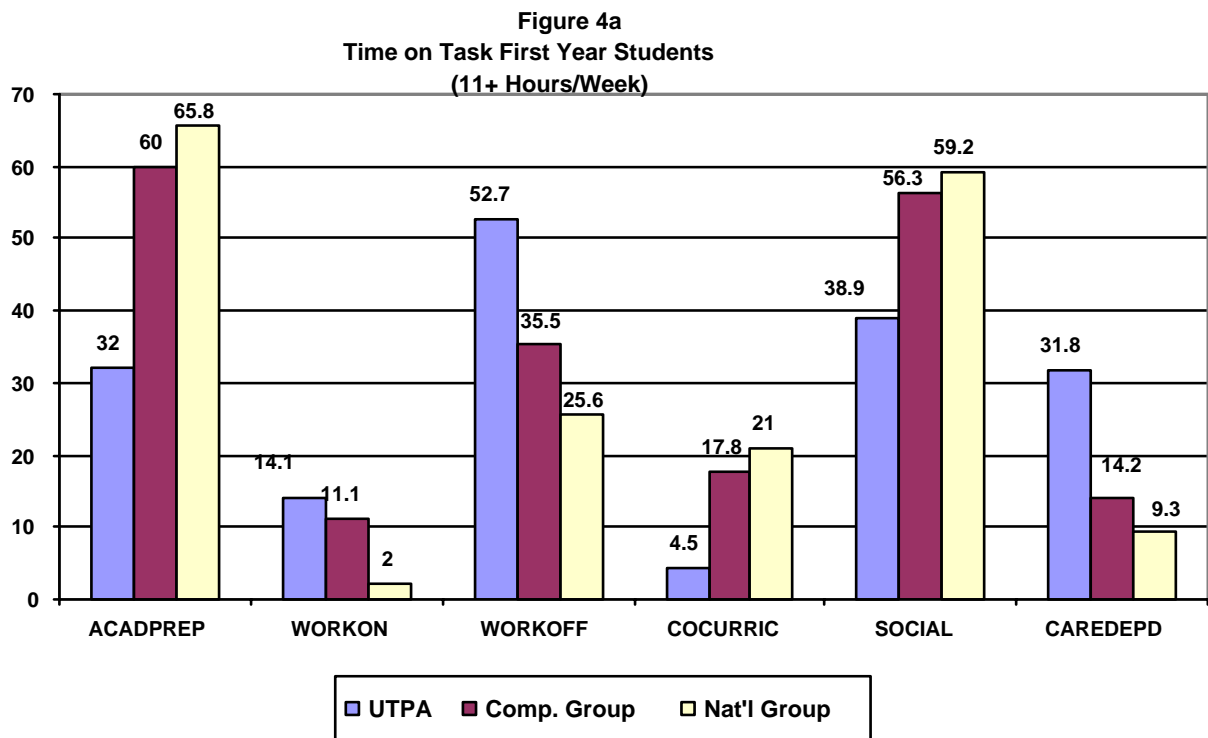
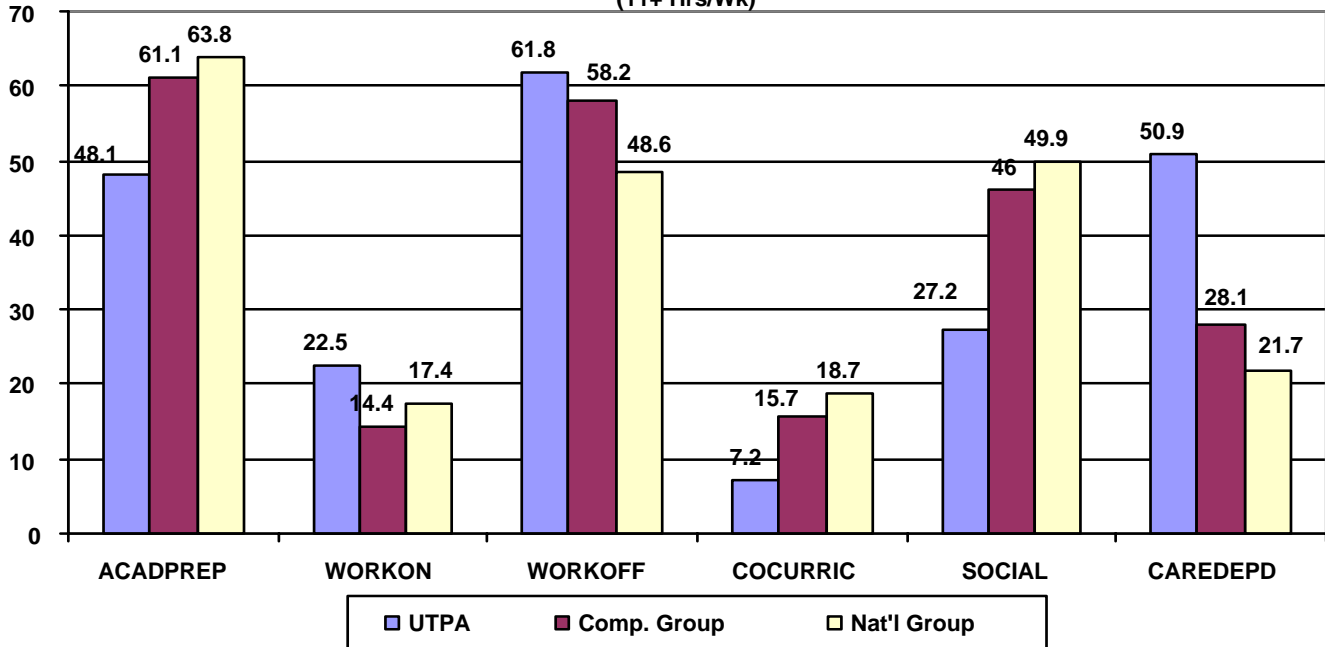


Figure 4b shows that

- 48.1% of the UTPA seniors spent more than 11 hours per week on preparations for class, but 63.8% of the national group were in this time range.
- On the other hand, 61.8% compared to 48.6% at the national level worked off campus for over 11 hours a week.
- A little over 50% of UTPA seniors and 21.7% nationally cared for dependents.

Figure 4b
Time on Task Seniors
(11+ Hrs/Wk)



Given the time spent on work and family responsibilities, UTPA students had less time for *socializing* (SOCIAL) and for *participating in co-curricular activities* (COCURRIC).

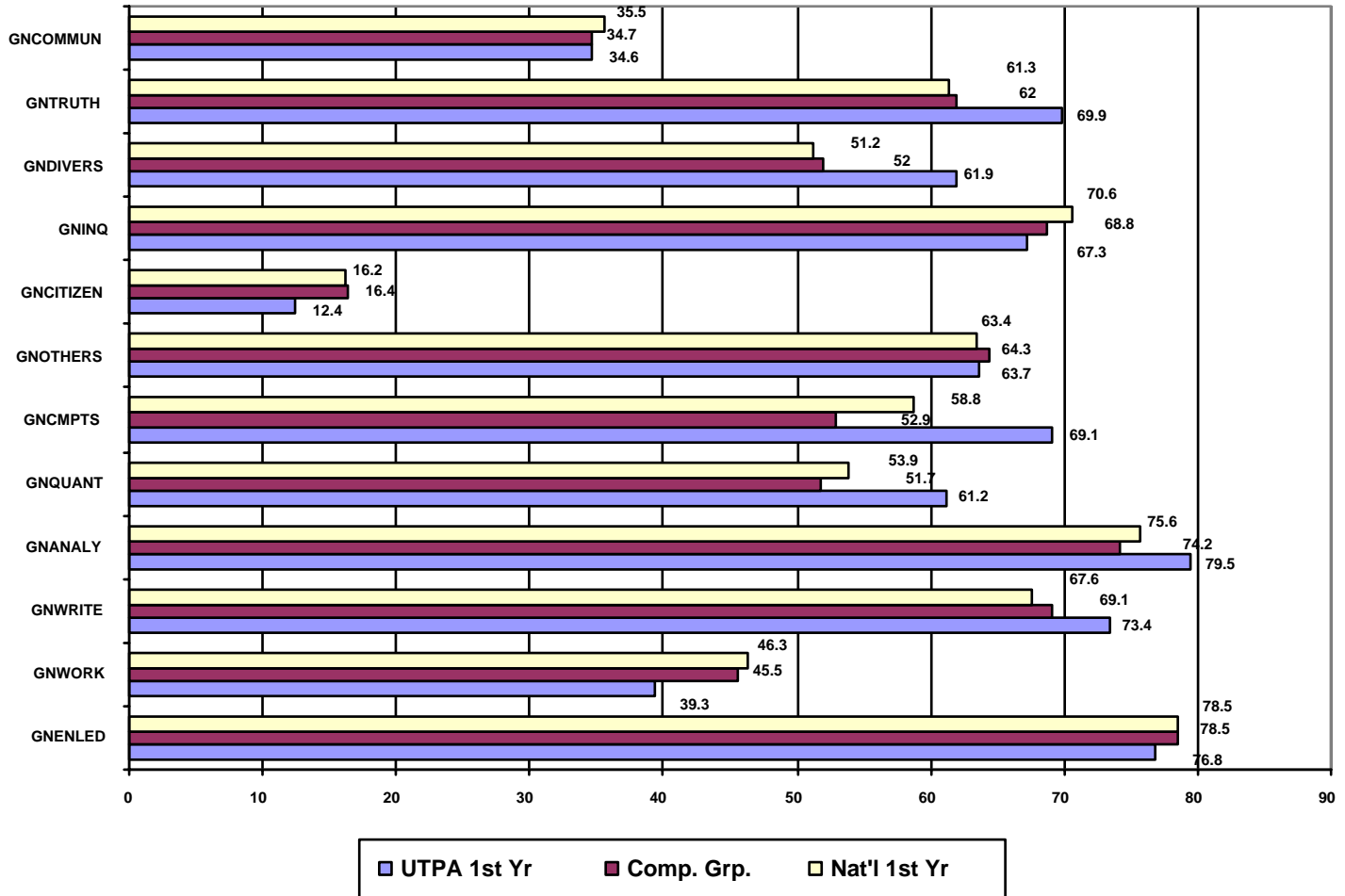
- In this regard 38.9% (59.2% national) of 1st year and 27.2% (49.9% national) of seniors spent more than 11 hours a week in the former activity;
- 4.5% (21.0% national) and 7.2% (18.7% national), respectively, spent this amount of time in the latter.

Educational and Personal Growth Three factors are principal components of this area. The first is *personal/social development* which is characterized by interpersonal effectiveness and by socially responsible and civic-minded individuals. The second is *general education* which encompasses items that are earmarks of a well-educated individual; and the third is *practical competence*, which reflects the skill areas needed to become economically independent in today's post-college job market (Figures 5a and 5b).

With the exception of three items, two-thirds or more of the 1st year and seniors from UTPA reported growth in all areas of educational and personal development. Their response rates were in line with those of the participants at the national level. Development in the general education factor included *writing*

(GNWRITE) and speaking (GNSPEAK) clearly and effectively, thinking critically and analytically (GNANALY) and acquiring a broad general education

Figure 5a
Contributions to Development First Year Students
(Quite a Bit/Very Much)



(GNGENLED).

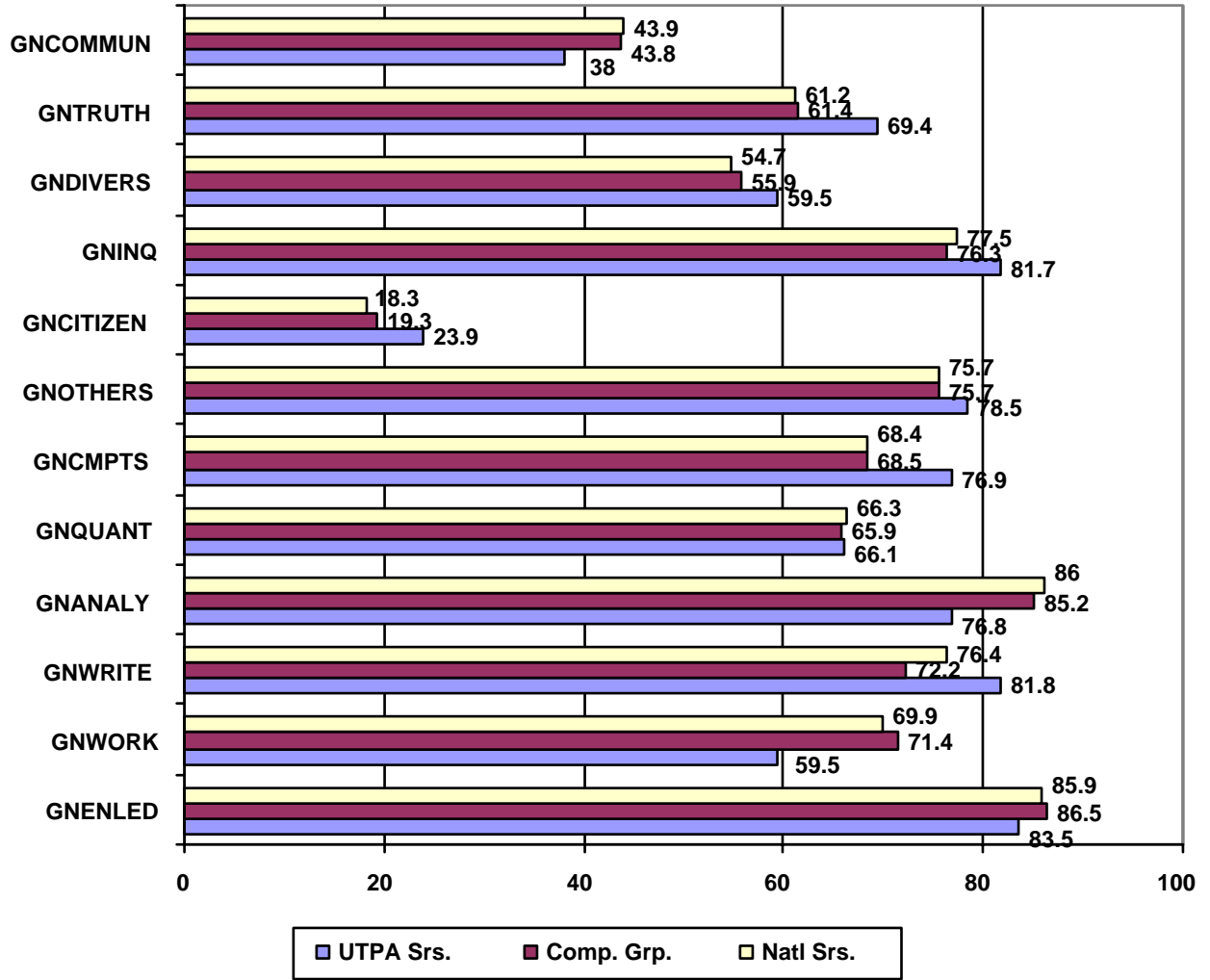
As might be expected, 39.3% of UTPA 1st year students, but 59.5% of seniors have shown development relative to the factor of practical competence, *acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills* (GNWORK). Both groups responded that they were able to *analyze quantitative problems* (GNANALY) and were able to use *computing and information technology* (GNCMPTS).

Social development, in the form of civic responsibility, showed less growth, based on the percentages, for UTPA as well as the national group:

- 12.4% and 16.2%, respectively, of freshmen; and, 23.9% and 18.3%, respectively, of seniors indicated they devoted quite a bit or very much time to *voting in elections* (GNCITIZN);

- 34.6% and 35.5% first year students; and 38.0% and 43.9% seniors, respectively, were contributing to the welfare of their community

Figure 5b
Contributions to Development Senior Respondents
(Quite a Bit/Very Much)

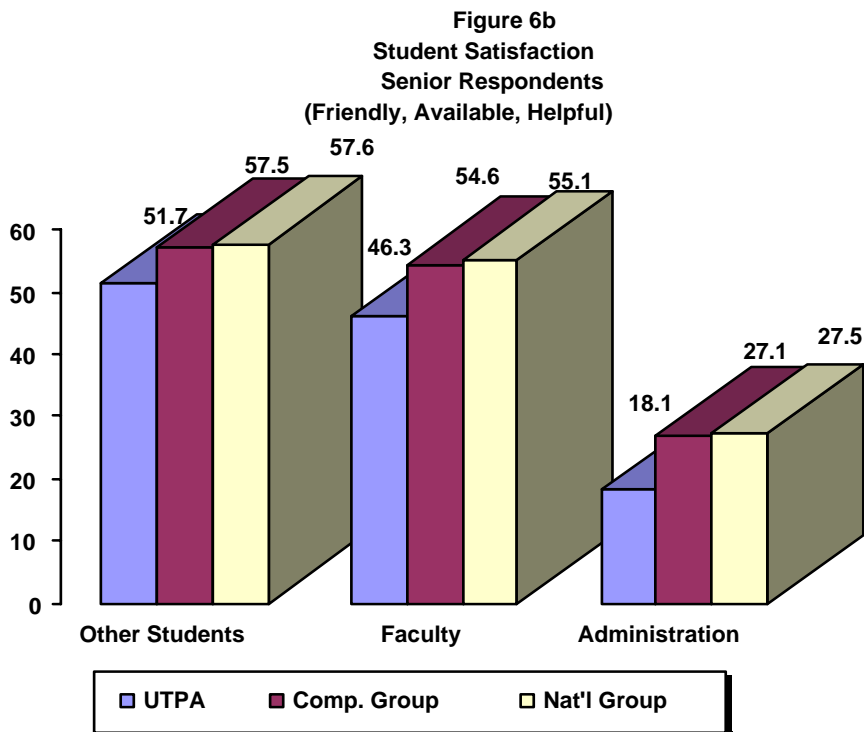
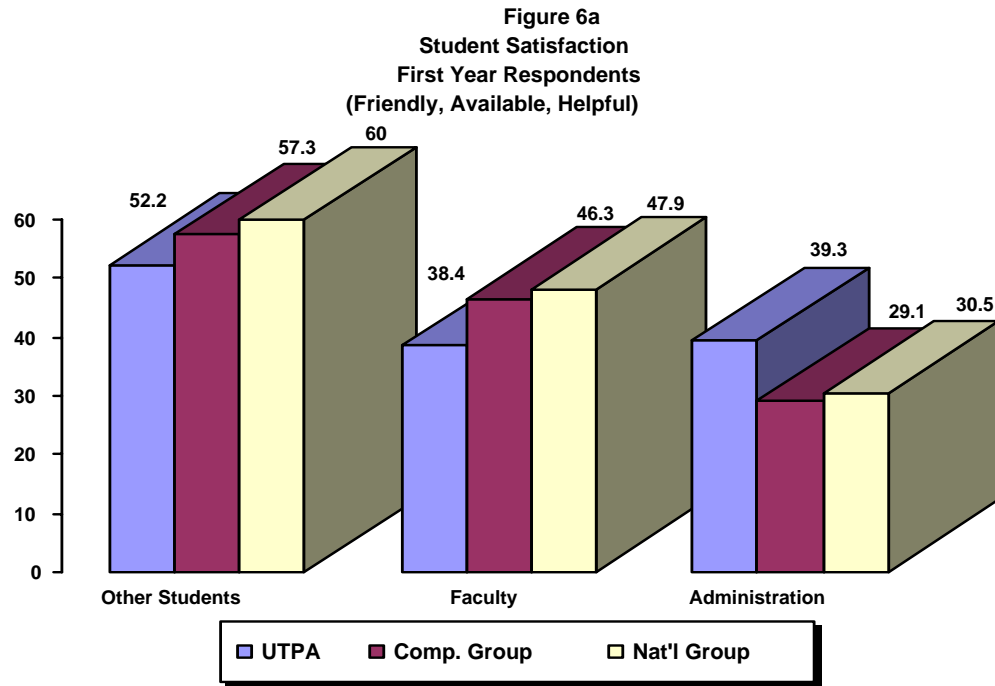


(GNCOMMUN).

Opinions About Your School

Principal components of this section were *satisfaction with college and personal relations*, and *the campus climate*. The former represents the level of satisfaction with the overall experience and interaction with others; and, the latter is a broad construct that reflects the degree to which students believe their school's programs, policies and practices are supportive and instrumental in helping them attain their personal and educational goals. Thus, represented are students' views of important aspects of the college atmosphere and its emphasis on philosophy and attitudes they see that the college encompasses and the

quality of their relations. Figures 6a and 6b reflect students' perception of the institution's environment relative to the level of satisfaction of interactions with others; i.e., 6 and 7 on a scale of 1 to 7 as described below.



Other Students: The scale for relationships with other students was from 1 (unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation) to 7 (friendly, supportive, sense of belonging).

- 52.2% of the 1st year and 51.7% of senior respondents from UTPA indicated their *relationships with other students* were friendly and supportive and they felt a certain sense of belonging among their peers, 6/7 on the scale. (The means were 5.31 and 5.21, respectively).
- At comparable universities these were 57.3% and 51.7%, respectively (The means were 5.41 and 5.44, respectively).

Faculty: The scale for faculty was from 1 (unavailable, unhelpful and unsympathetic) to 7 (available, helpful and sympathetic)

- 38.4% of freshmen and 46.3% of senior from UTPA marked 6/7 on the scale (means of 4.86 and 4.98, respectively).
- 46.3% and 54.6%, respectively, from comparable institutions (means of 5.18 and 5.37) responded on the positive side.

Administrative Offices/Personnel: The scale for administrative personnel was 1 (unhelpful, inconsiderate and rigid) to 7 (helpful, considerate and flexible).

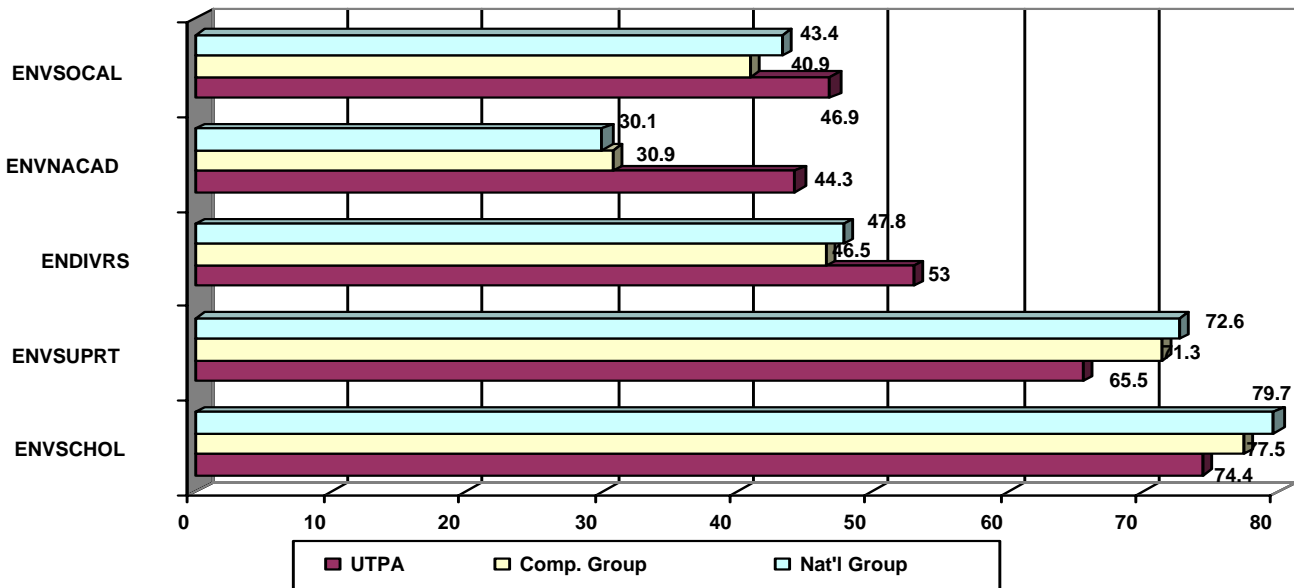
- 39.3% of UTPA 1st year and 18.1% of seniors indicated that administrative personnel were more helpful than not or 6 and 7 on the scale. (The means were 4.71 and 4.03, respectively).
- 29.1% and 27.1%, respectively, from comparable institutions were positive about their relationship with administrative offices (The means were 4.52 and 4.27, respectively).

In addition, most of the students at the entry and exit levels were generally satisfied with their college experiences and would probably choose to attend UTPA again if they were to start over.

- 74.4% of 1st year and 74.2% of seniors from UTPA evaluated their entire educational experience at this institution as *good/excellent*.
 - 84.1% and 85.7%, respectively, from comparable institutions responded that their college experience was good/excellent.
- 88.7% of 1st year and 77.3% of seniors from UTPA indicated that they would *probably yes/definitely yes* choose to attend UTPA if they were to start over again.
 - 80.8 and 78.7%, respectively, from comparable *universities would choose to attend their college again*.

Student Development: Students, UTPA freshmen and senior groups, believe the institution’s philosophy is one that encourages students to spend time on academic development (ENVSCHOL), but fewer students are of the opinion that UTPA provides the support they need to succeed academically (ENVSUPRT). These results are fairly consistent with the opinions of the groups at the national level (Figures 7a and 7b)).

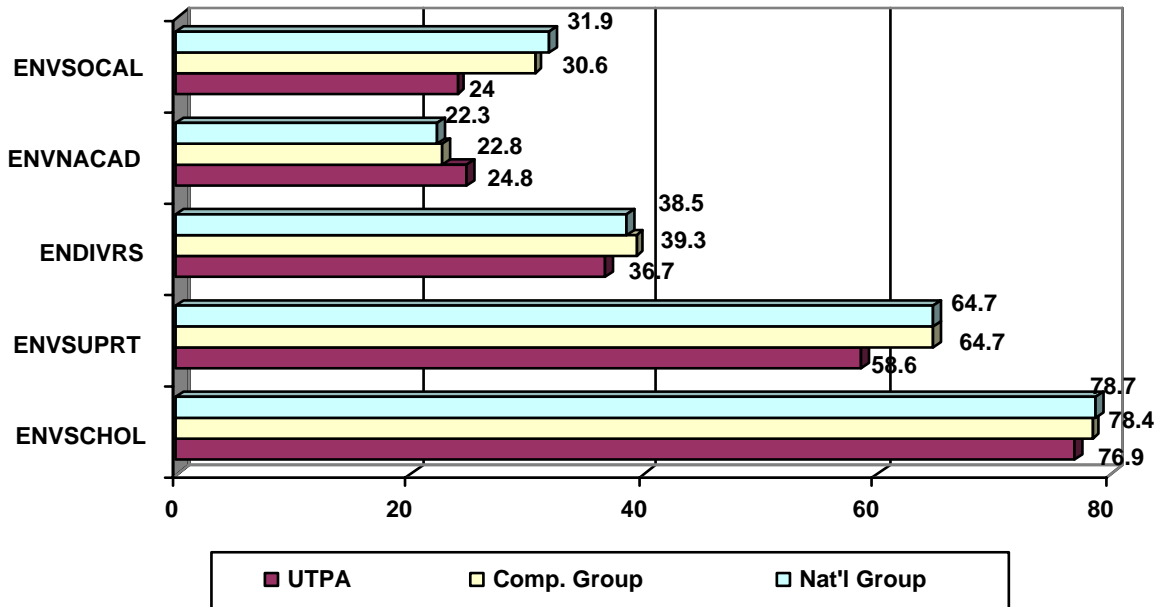
Figure 7a
Opinions About Campus Climate
First Year Students
(Quite a Bit/Very Much)



It appears, however, that the response rates between freshmen and seniors are widely disparate on the factors related to non academic areas.

- More than one-half of the freshmen, but approximately one-third of the seniors do not believe UTPA encourages contact among the students from different economic, social, and racial/ethnic groups (ENVDIVRS). (This may be the result of the homogeneous nature of the institution’s student body).

Figure 7b
 Opinions About Campus Climate
 Senior Respondents
 (Quite a Bit/Very Much)



- Moreover, less than one-half of the former group and about one-fourth of the latter do not believe the institution is sympathetic to students' non-academic responsibilities of work, family, etc. (ENVNACAD), nor do they see the campus climate as helping them to develop socially (ENVSOCAL).

Summary Statement

UTPA students have been described as “non-traditional”; that is, they are older, from an ethnic minority socio-economically disadvantaged, and are first generation college students. Moreover, they are generally under-prepared for college level coursework in reading, writing, and mathematics, although in recent years they have become better prepared for the rigors of college. The majority are commuter students who must work to help support their families. In general, then, the UTPA participants of the NSSE study reflected the characteristics of the non traditional student, as described, and were different from those of the national sample and the comparable universities group.

Given the contrasting background information about the respondents, it was expected that the survey questions would generate disparate views about the college experience between UTPA students and their counterparts at the national level. This was indeed the case on certain sections of the questionnaire and as evidenced by mean score differences at the $p < 0.001$ level of significance.

The data also revealed differences in the response rates on many items between the freshmen and seniors, a factor taken into consideration by the researchers.

Because all UT System components were involved in this project, there is the chance that an institution may have to prepare a response to its results in a system-wide report. Thus, the following discussion provides a summary of the results with some suggestions for using the data effectively in order to enhance student engagement on the UTPA campus.

Strengths & Opportunities: It is suggested that departments and administrative units interested in formulating goals for students engagement should first determine the strengths as evidenced by the data, and then create a list of items that represent opportunities for improvement. The focus in this first stage should be on the data and not on explanations or solutions. There may be some confusing or noteworthy items that the representative groups may wish to discuss while reviewing the data. These items may be useful as to which would have the most impact on establishing department goals. There will be differences in the results of this process because of the varying missions reflected by administrative units, academic departments and faculty, student services personnel, etc.

The following chart is an example of some of the strengths of the institution as evidenced by the positive response rate of the UTPA students. Also included are some areas that are representative of opportunities for improvement.

Effective Educational Practices

Area: Academic, Intellectual and Social	
Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments • Worked with other students on projects during class • Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructors standards or expectations • Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.) • Rewrote a paper or assignment several times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used electronic medium (e-mail, list-serve, chat group, etc) to discuss or complete an assignment • Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor • Received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance • Worked with faculty on activities other than coursework

Judging from these areas of strengths and weaknesses and given opinions about the institution's learning environment (see Opinions About UTPA), students tend to be positive about their relationships with other students, but they are fairly neutral about their opinions of faculty. If the institution sees contact among students as a way in which to increase the opportunities for successful completion of coursework, then it should be prepared to create an atmosphere of collaboration

in the learning process. Moreover, if the institution determines that student/faculty contact outside of the classroom is important to retention, then, the mission of the University Retention Advisement Program (URAP) could be enhanced (see URAP mission statement and goals, Appendix C).

Important to student learning is an institutional environment that is perceived by students as inclusive and affirming. The extent to which UTPA is seen to encourage participation in the learning process with other students are the factors following below. Responses in some cases were significantly different at the $* < 0.001$ level when compared to those at the national level. UTPA students were less likely

- * to have had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from theirs;
- * to have had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own;
- to work with other students on projects during class;
- to have tutored or taught other students or to have participated in a community based project as part of a regular course, although these were to the same extent as students at the national level,
- *to work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments; however, seniors were more likely to do so than freshmen

Time on Task/Expectations/Diversity: These factors have been shown to be important principles of student engagement. They channel students' energies toward appropriate activities and encourage them to participate at an active level. In these regards, the institution may wish to consider emphasizing the need for students to put more effort toward behaviors that will result in greater gains. As suggested by Kuh (2000) and the NSSE group of researchers,

Thus, the most educationally effective colleges and universities-- those that add value—are able to channel students' energies toward appropriate activities and engage them at a high level in these activities. Emphasizing good educational practice helps focus faculty, staff, students, and others on the tasks and activities that are associated with higher yields in terms of desired student outcomes. Toward these ends, faculty and administrators would do well to arrange the curriculum and other aspects of the college experience in accord with these good practices, thereby encourage students to put forth more effort (e.g., write more papers, read more books, meet more frequently with faculty and peers, use information technology appropriately) which will result in greater gains in such areas as critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, responsible citizenship, etc.

Some of the factors that need more attention from students may be unreachable, through no fault of their own or because they are not under the student's control. Others may be a matter of familiarizing students with the expectations of the university environment through freshmen courses, study skills development, mentoring, etc.

Because a large percentage of UTPA students spent **more** time *working for pay off-campus and providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)*, and **less** time *in socializing and participating in co-curricular activities* (an age-old dilemma at UTPA), it may be helpful to devise means by which to increase their connection with the institution. The "activity period" was devised in the past to address the problem of helping students to increase their sense of belonging to and integration with UTPA. There may be other ways to address this problem if the institution decides that this is a relevant retention issue.

The degrees to which the institution challenges students to engage in behaviors that are defined as good practices appear to be less than those at the national level. UTPA students were likely

- to have been assigned fewer textbooks, book or book-length packs of course reading
- to have prepared fewer papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- to have read books on their own (not assigned)
- to have been given examinations that were mostly multiple choice or short answer exams compared to mostly essay or open-ended problems
- not to be expected to use higher order thinking skills; i.e., they indicated that their courses stressed the lowest mental functions, memorization as opposed to applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.

Educational and Personal Development: The items related to these factors characterize the extent to which students' education contributed to interpersonal effectiveness. Response rates on this section were fairly consistent with those of respondents at the national level, save one, and most were positive.

- Students believed they were acquiring a broad general education, were learning to write and speak clearly and effectively and were learning or had learned to think critically and analytically.
- To a lesser degree, they believed they were acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills (the freshmen less so than seniors);

were learning to analyze quantitative problems and were becoming competent in using computing and information technology.

- In personal/social development, they indicated less growth in voting in elections and contributing to the welfare of the community. On the other hand, they were more likely
 - to be learning to work effectively with others and on their own
 - to understand themselves and to understand people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Opinions About UTPA: The items related to this factor represent students' views of important aspects of the learning environment. There is an emphasis on philosophy and attitudes they see that the institution encompasses.

The majority of the students do not see the institution as helping them cope with non-academic responsibilities nor as providing the support they need to thrive socially (see Table 12 in text). Furthermore, seniors, more so than the freshmen, are of the opinion that the institutional climate does not necessarily encourage contact among students from different economic, social and racial or ethnic backgrounds. This, of course, may be a result of the homogeneous nature of the UTPA student population.

To a greater degree, the respondents believe the university supports an environment that encourages students to spend significant amounts of time studying, and on academic work. To a certain extent, they also view the institution as providing the support they need to succeed academically.

Although students tend to be positive about their relationships with other students, they are fairly neutral about their association with faculty. On the other hand, with respect to "customer satisfaction" they are less than satisfied with *Administrative Personnel and Offices*. The mean average for the freshmen was 4.71 on a scale of 1 (unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid) to 7 (helpful, considerate, flexible), but the mean average was 4.03 for the seniors (the mean at the national level was 4.30). It may be that as students progress through the system, they view the administrative personnel in more negative terms. The administrative offices of the institution may wish to follow-up on this particular item to determine specific reasons why there is a decrease in student satisfaction.

Almost 75% of the students who responded to the survey were generally satisfied with their college experiences and approximately two-thirds would choose to attend UTPA again if they were to start over. The latter item is supported by the data about student attendance/enrollment at UTPA: 65.3% of the seniors began their college career at UTPA which suggests that 35% of the senior respondents had attended another institution sometime in the past. At the freshmen level 13.3% had attended another institution, but 96.5% began college at UTPA.

National Survey of Student Engagement

The College Student Report

Introduction: In the Spring 2000 term, The University of Texas-Pan American participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) project, cosponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The Pew Forum for Undergraduate Learning. NSSE is supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) was engaged to coordinate the development of the instrument, to test its utility and feasibility, to select a strategy for pilot administration and to determine who should pilot the survey. The NCHEMS Design Team selected NSSE staff from members of Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning to conduct the project (Concept Paper, NSSE).

The College Student Report, the instrument designed for this endeavor, provided valuable information about the extent to which students participate in the educational process; i.e., students' views of collegiate quality. There are several sections to the survey as described below:

College Activities: Requested information about the extent to which students engage in certain experiences inside and outside the classroom including the amount of contact with faculty and other students. Identifies specific ways in which the contact may be made—e mail, chat groups, list-serve, etc.

Includes: mental activities, how time is spent during a typical week, plans for inclusion of certain coursework or activities that are/may be part of their education—internships, community service, general education coursework, etc.

Educational and Personal Growth: Identifies areas which students' education has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development.

Opinions About Their School: Emphasis on philosophy and attitudes they see that the college encompasses and the quality of certain relationships (students, faculty, administrative personnel and offices).

Background Information: Typical variables: age, gender, ethnicity, classification, other post secondary schools attended, etc.

The NSSE conducted a successful pilot of the project in 1999 with 75 selected colleges and universities. Then, in Spring 2000 approximately 276 colleges and universities participated in the first national administration of the survey. These institutions were divided into comparison groups by consortium and/or by the Carnegie Classification System: Research Universities I and II, Doctoral Universities I and II, Master's Universities and Colleges I and II, and Baccalaureate Colleges I and II.

The UTPA's comparison group was Master's Universities and Colleges I & II. In addition to Pan American, 5 UT System components (Brownsville, El Paso, San Antonio, Tyler and Permian Basin) were included with this group, together with 4 other Texas universities (Abilene Christian University, Our Lady of the Lake, Southwest Texas State University and St. Edwards University). About eighty-three (83) out-of-state universities were also made part of this comparison group (Appendix A).

Significance of the Data: As a research tool, and as defined by NSSE, *The College Student Report* can be used in several ways. It is a

- Benchmarking instrument—establishing regional and national norms of educational practices and performance by sector.
- Diagnostic tool—identifying areas in which a school can enhance students' educational experiences.
- Monitoring device—documenting institutional improvement over time.

Scope of the Study: Higher education research on student persistence in college has concluded that the experiences of lower-division and upper-division students are quite different at most colleges and that *“what happens in upper-level courses in a student's major is especially distinctive”* (Concept Paper, NSSE 2000). Thus, in order to capture the overall collegiate experience, such variations were identified from sampling students at two points in their academic careers. By deliberately selecting students at different levels, inferences can be drawn about the contrasts between the responses of “survivors” and “drop outs” (e.g., according to retention research, in general survivors have had more successful experiences than dropouts at any given institution).

Consequently, *The College Student Report* was designed to be administered to random samples of first-year students and seniors at public and private four-year colleges and universities. It was completed either via a traditional paper questionnaire or on the World Wide Web. The random sampling method used by NSSE project staff ensured that *“the results would be comparable, meaningful, credible and usable for institutional self-study and improvement efforts as well as consortium comparisons and national benchmarking”* (NSSE Concept Paper, 2000).

Therefore, as determined by NSSE: *“The goal for the spring 2000 is to survey freshmen who began baccalaureate study in the summer or fall of 1999 and attended classes at your institution for at least one semester/quarter and*

seniors who are on schedule to graduate in spring or summer 2000” (Concept Paper, 2000).

Accordingly, the sample was comprised of 151,910 first-year and senior students who were selected from electronic data files provided by the participating colleges and universities. The sampling procedures called for an equal number of 1st year and senior students to be sent the survey with the standard sample size determined by the number of undergraduate students enrolled at the institution.

Based on a sample size of 700 for institutions with a student population between 4,000 and 15,000, UTPA sent an institutional data file of all first-year and senior students defined as follows:

Freshmen: *“All undergraduate students (traditional, continuing education, full-time or part-time) who are—according to your institution’s criteria—currently classified as a freshman (first-year student) **not counting** advanced placement credit and were enrolled in the fall 1999 semester and will also be classified as a continuing freshman (first-year student) in spring 2000 (not counting advanced placement).”*

Seniors: *“All undergraduate students (traditional, continuing education, full-time or part-time) who are currently enrolled in fall 1999 and, counting the number of credits enrolled in fall 1999, are within 12-24 hours /6-8 courses (based on semesters) of graduation in spring 2000 or summer 2000”.*

Characteristics of the Data: Although the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) is aware of the potentially extensive nature of this study, the general objective herein is to highlight some findings of the NSSE report. It is not intended to be an all inclusive report based on a formal statistical analysis, neither is it intended to identify or present any implications about institutional issues which may result from the data. It is, however, appropriate for decision-makers to determine the relevance of the information and to undertake appropriate measures to encourage further analysis in addressing the specific needs of individual users. To assist in this regard, UTPA was provided a diskette of the survey results which can be duplicated for others who might be interested in implementing a more extensive follow-up study.

Organization of the Report: The report which follows is divided into four sections. *Section I* discusses the conceptual framework of *The College Student Report*. *Section II* contains a profile of the respondent groups, comparing the characteristics of UTPA students with other institutional and national profiles and providing some information about overall response rates. *Section III* presents

selected results of the survey. *Section IV* is a summary of the findings from the survey results as they pertain to UTPA students.

Section I Framework Of The Project

Background

The following discussion is taken directly from the NSSE Concept Paper (2000) and an extensive overview of the psychometric properties of *The College Student Report* conducted by George D. Kuh of the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning. The article published by Dr. Kuh, [The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual Framework and Overview of Psychometric Properties](#), provides extensive detail on reliability and validity measures of the survey items. A copy of these reports is available upon request.

The NSSE project was developed, in part, to address the need of universities and colleges to strengthen their responsibility in providing meaningful quality improvement, especially in enhancing undergraduate education. According to those involved in the development of the project, dialogue about “quality” has centered on concerns related to institutional accreditation processes which, for the most part, focus on resource and process measures. Government oversight, given licensure requirements and program review mechanisms, in turn continues to emphasize regulation and procedural compliance. Third-party judgments of “quality” as evidenced by media rankings result from variables such as student selectivity and faculty credentials. As noted in the NSSE Concept Paper, *“None of these get at the heart of the matter: the investments that institutions make to foster proven instructional practices and the kinds of activities, experiences, and outcomes that their students receive as a result”*.

Thus, NSSE was designed to seek information from undergraduates directly about their educational experiences in order to provide colleges and universities with results about institutional quality based on more valuable information than current resource and reputation measures. *The College Student Report*, developed as a result of the initiative, is firmly based on the body of research that relates particular classroom activities and specific faculty and peer practices to high-quality undergraduate student outcomes (see References). In other words, *“what counts most in terms of desired outcomes of college is what students do during college, not who they are or even where they go to college”*.

Principles of Student Engagement

In student development literature, research shows that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development (see References). Thus, the bottom line of this assessment project is this: “*Those institutions that more fully engage their students in the variety of activities that contribute to valued outcomes of college can claim to be of high quality in comparison with similar types of colleges and universities*”.

The set of indicators best known to measure student engagement is identified in the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” (Chickering & Gramson, 1987, in Kuh 2000). These principles include student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. Also important to student learning are institutional environments that are perceived by students as inclusive and affirming and where expectations for performance are clearly communicated and set at reasonably high levels (from the Education Commission of the States, 1995, in Kuh [2000]). All of these factors are positively related to student satisfaction and achievement on a variety of dimensions. Thus, the most educationally effective colleges and universities—those that add value—are able to channel students’ energies toward appropriate activities and encourage them to participate in them at an active level.

Emphasizing good educational practice helps focus faculty, staff, students and others on the tasks and activities that are associated with desired student outcomes. Toward these ends, it has been suggested that faculty and administrators arrange the curriculum and other aspects of the college experience in accord with these good practices, thereby encouraging students to put forth more effort (e.g., write more papers, read more books, meet more frequently with faculty and peers, use information technology appropriately). These behaviors will result in greater gains in such areas as critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, responsible citizenship, etc.

The Survey Instrument The College Student Report

In general, then, *The College Student Report* includes items of actual student behavior and perceptions of the extent to which the institution actively encourages high levels of engagement. The questions fall into three broad categories. ***Student behavior*** includes items about how students spend their time inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., have you worked with other students outside of class to prepare class assignments?). ***Institutional actions and requirements*** include specific items about the curriculum (e.g., how much reading and writing have you done?) and about faculty behavior (e.g., have you worked with a faculty member on a significant scholarly task such as a research

project?). ***Student reactions to college*** include items that seek students' perceptions about the quality of their own experiences (how would you rate the overall quality of your experience here?). This last category also includes questions about self-reported gains in skills that students feel they have developed as a result of attending college (e.g., has college helped you to develop your ability to think critically and analytically?).

Consequently the emphasis on student engagement is intended to shift the focus on quality; away from resources and inputs and toward outcomes, while being specific enough about processes to indicate concretely the kinds of improvements in which colleges should invest. The ability to compare results among peer institutions to identify best practices is also an important feature.

Section II Profile of NSSE 2000 Respondents

Overview Of Respondents/Institutions

This section of the report contains a profile of the respondent groups, comparing the characteristics of UTPA students with those from the comparison group of institutions (Master's Universities and Colleges I and II) and NSSE national profiles. The response rates were 34%, 42%, and 42%, respectively. Represented by these percentages were 113 first-year and 121 seniors from UTPA. From the comparison groups, there were 11,238 and 12,725, respectively; and, 30,673 and 32,262, respectively, from the national sample.

The mode of administration of the survey was optional for respondents; they completed either the standard mail version, the standard version with WEB option, or WEB only. Eighty three percent of UTPA students (83%) used the mail and 17% used the WEB option. These figures are comparable to the comparison group's rates of 76% and 18%, respectively. An additional 7% used the WEB only, but none from this group were UTPA respondents.

NSSE believes that participating institutions and respondents approximate the characteristics of students enrolled at the participating schools as well as the national profile of all four-year colleges and universities. Their source of the comparative data is the 1997 IPEDS database, the most recent on file. For example, according to regions, on the national level, IPEDS shows 7.2% of the institutions are located in the Southwest; 6.9% participated in the study. Moreover, nationally 26.7% of institutions are given the Carnegie Classification of Master's Colleges and Universities I & II; 39.5% in this category participated in the study. From these and other data, NSSE concluded that the results would reflect the experiences of a broad cross section of students attending four year colleges and universities from all regions of the country.

Class: Given the manner in which students were selected for participation, there was an almost equal percentage of students in the first-year of college (30,890 or 49%) and seniors (32,493 or 51%) in the national sample. From UTPA, 48.3% (113) were in the former classification and 51.7% (121) were in the latter.

Demographic Profile of NSSE Respondents: In Table 1, the first column identifies the demographic variables, the next three columns represent 1st year students from UTPA, the comparison group and the national sample of NSSE participants, followed by UTPA seniors, their comparison group from Master's Colleges and Universities I & II, and the profile of seniors in the national sample. Table 2 includes other characteristics about the population who responded to the survey.

Table 1
Profile of Participants

Variable	First Year Respondents			Senior Respondents		
	UTPA	Comparison Group	National Sample	UTPA	Comparison Group	National Sample
Gender						
Men	33.3	29.6	33.1	40.0	31.0	33.7
Women	66.7	70.4	66.9	60.0	69.0	66.3
*Ethnicity						
Am.Indian/Native	2.7	1.4	1.5	0	1.5	1.6
Asian/Pacific Isl.	1.8	5.2	5.8	0	4.7	5.5
African Am	0	7.2	6.9	.8	7.1	6.7
White	11.5	73.9	77.7	8.3	75.5	78.3
Mexican Am., P.R. , Other Hisp.	90.3	11.5	7.5	86.8	9.5	6.4
Other	3.5	5.4	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.7
Age						
=<19 yrs	81.4	82.0	86.5	0	.1	.2
20-29	16.8	13.1	10.2	64.5	75.3	81.2
30-39	1.8	2.6	1.8	24.8	13.4	10.0
=>40	0	2.3	1.5	10.7	11.3	8.6

*May be greater than 100% as some students checked multiple racial or ethnic identifications.

Gender: According to NSSE, 33.4% of the population of respondents were men and 66.6% were women. Compared to the 1997 IPEDS data, the NSSE schools overall had 41.3% men and 58.7% women. NSSE explains the differences as consistent with the widely reported survey research data that women are more likely than men to return questionnaires. Furthermore, the proportion of women participating in higher education continues to grow annually so that the actual difference between NSSE respondents and undergraduates at NSSE participating schools may not be quite as large as the 8% shown (NSSE Concept Paper, 2000).

With respect to UTPA, overall 37% were men and 63% were women which is almost equal to that of the NSSE schools and IPEDS data. There are minor differences, however, within the UTPA respondents for the classifications shown, men comprised 33.3% of first year students and 40% of seniors.

According to the *Institutional Fact Book* (2000), in Fall 1999 at the undergraduate level 42.8% of the students were men and 57.2% were women.

Race/Ethnicity: As should be expected, the majority of the NSSE respondents at the freshman and senior level in the national sample were White, 77.7% and 78.3%, respectively. This compared to UTPA students of which 11.5% of freshmen and 8.3% of seniors were White. Nationally, 7.5% were Hispanic compared to 88% of the UTPA respondents. African Americans made up approximately 7% of the NSSE respondents, American Indian/Native American were 1% and 5% were Asian American. Of all UTPA respondents combined, these groups were 0%, 1% and 1%, respectively.

Age: Students 19 years of age or younger made up the largest group of first-year respondents: from UTPA it was 81.4% compared to 82% of the comparison group. Fifteen percent (15%) and 10%, respectively, were in the age range of 20-23.

The age range of respondents who were UTPA seniors, on the other hand, differed greatly from the comparable group. Between the ages of 20-29, 64.5% of UTPA and 75.3%, of the comparison population were in this range, but 24.8% and 13.4%, respectively, were between 30 and 39 years of age. The percentages were approximately the same in the age range of 40 years old or greater: 10.7%, UTPA and 11.3%, comparable universities.

Table 2
Other Characteristics

Variable	1 st Year UTPA	Comparison Group	National Sample	Seniors UTPA	Comparison Group	National Sample
Began college at current institution	96.5	90.2	92.0	65.3	51.6	59.6
Attended only current college	86.7	80.1	83.0	29.8	38.5	45.7
Attending FT	80.5	89.3	92.4	70.0	75.2	79.8
PT	19.5	10.7	7.6	30.0	24.8	20.2
Residence Within Driving Distance	86.7	39.6	26.4	93.4	68.4	56.3
Live with Family	87.6	37.5	24.8	86.0	49.1	38.4
Top 10 majors*						
Biology	7.1	9.0	11.0	5.8	7.2	8.8
Business	16.8	21.1	18.4	22.3	21.2	18.6
Communication	8.0	7.4	7.6	3.3	5.8	6.0
Computer & Info.	10.6	8.1	7.8	6.6	6.5	6.7
Education	18.6	17.5	14.1	33.6	18.2	14.6
Engineering	9.7	3.2	6.5	6.6	2.1	5.5
Foreign Langs.	7.1	3.4	4.1	2.5	2.7	3.3
Health-related	22.1	11.8	9.2	4.1	11.9	9.6
Social Sciences	10.6	14.6	16.1	14.0	18.3	19.6
Visual & Perf. Arts	8.0	8.8	7.2	2.5	4.8	5.4
One Major Field	69.9	72.4	70.1	86.0	78.6	76.3
Multiple Majors	30.1	27.6	29.9	14.0	21.4	23.7

*Based on UTPA first-year sample; alpha ordered

Enrollment Status: Seventy-five percent (75%) of UTPA respondents were enrolled full time compared to 82% of the comparison group. According to the records, 80.5% of the UTPA freshmen compared to 89.3% of the national comparable group were enrolled full time; and, 70% and 75.2%, respectively, of the seniors were full time students.

College Attendance: Almost one-half (45.7%) of all seniors at the national level had attended only the institution in which they were enrolled at the time they completed the survey, and 38.5% from the comparison group of institutions did so. In contrast, of UTPA seniors, 29.8% had attended only UTPA.

On the other hand, 65.3% of the seniors began their college career at UTPA compared to 51.6% of respondents from master's level universities and 59.6% of the NSSE national sample who started at their current college.

At the freshmen level 96.5% of UTPA respondents began college at UTPA, and 86.7% had attended only this institution (e.g., 3.5% of the freshmen started college somewhere else and 13.3% had attended another institution). In contrast, 90.2% of the comparable group freshmen began college at their current institution; and, 80.1% had attended only their current institution.

Living Arrangements: Less than 1% of 1st year UTPA respondents lived in a dorm or on-campus housing differing from a rate of 55.6% for the comparable group. On the other hand, none of the seniors from UTPA, but 15% of the comparison group lived in campus housing.

The majority of senior respondents lived in a residence (house, apartment, etc.) within driving distance to their institution: 93.4% of UTPA respondents and 68.4% of the comparable group. Of the group living within driving distance, 86% and 49.1%, respectively, lived with family or a family member.

Of 1st year respondents living within driving distance, 86.7% from UTPA, but 39.6% of the comparable group marked this answer. Moreover, 87.6% lived with family compared to 37.5% from the comparison universities.

Major Field of Study: Based on the UTPA first year respondents, the top five (5) major fields of study were Health-related (22.1%), Education (18.6%), Business (16.8%), Computer Information (10.6%) and Social Sciences (10.6%). Of the UTPA seniors, even though the percentages in these major areas were different, they were also the top five major fields of study: Health related (4.1%), Education (33.6%), Business (22.3%), Computer Information (6.6%) (Engineering was also 6.6%), and Social Sciences (14.0%). There was one difference at the national level for both the first-year and senior students; Biology was included in the top 5, but Computer Information was not. About 30% of 1st year students and 14% of the seniors from UTPA indicated they had multiple majors. These percentages are about equal to those of respondents at the

national level: 27.6% of the 1st year and 21.4% of the senior respondents at the comparison universities.

Section III Selected Results of the Survey

The purpose of Section III is to present selected findings of *The College Student Report*, the instrument designed for this study, which was administered in the Spring 2000. Some preliminary analyses of the patterns of engagement of the various groups of students are revealed, including those of the freshmen and seniors from UTPA, the comparable university group (i.e., Carnegie Classification System of Master's Colleges and Universities I & II) and the total NSSE national sample. Moreover, the presentation provides (1) a view of the nature and frequency of undergraduate student engagement in good educational practices and (2) a brief mention of the items that show significant differences in the results of a series of regression analyses conducted by NSSE controlling for various student characteristics and such institutional factors as selectivity, sector, and size as outlined in Appendix B.

College Activities

This section includes 20 items that represent activities in which students engage inside and outside the classroom. The majority have been designated as *good educational practices*; i.e., research has shown they are positively correlated with many desired outcomes of college (Kuh, 2000). These factors relate to faculty/student interaction, peer cooperation, exposure to diverse views and the time spent in certain identified tasks.

Table 3 shows that nine (9) of the 20 items were identified as having mean scores between the UTPA and the comparable universities and NSSE national sample which were significantly different at the $p < 0.001^*$ level (Appendix B). The frequency distributions of these items and others found in Table 3 show recordings of *often* or *very often* by the respondents. The other variable values were *never* and *occasionally*. The least frequent college activities, as defined by NSSE, are determined by combining the *often* or *very often* responses and using a cut-off point of less than 20% for either the 1st year students or seniors. This means that fewer than 1/5th of the students engaged in these activities frequently.

The question asked, as it related to this group of academic experiences, was the following: **In your experience at this institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?**

(*Note: $p < 0.001$ indicates that the difference between UTPA's mean score and the comparison group or national mean on that item would not have occurred by chance 99.9% of the time. The effect size is also given in Appendix B. This indicates the magnitude of the difference between means. It was found by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the mean of the group with which the institution is being compared [i.e., comparison group and national sample]. T-tests for both groups were conducted without UTPA data).

Table 3
Academic, Intellectual and Social Experiences
Which Show Significant Differences Between UTPA and Comparable Groups

*Activity (Item responses values - often/very often)**		UTPA %	Comp. %	Nat'l %
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion	1 st Yr	38.1	55.6	55.7
	Srs.	55.4	70.5	69.5
Made a class presentation	1 st Yr	18.6	30.1	26.7
	Srs.	67.5	60.9	57.7
Used e-mail to communicate with an Instructor or other students	1 st Yr	32.7	50.8	57.1
	Srs.	40.5	52.0	60.0
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	1 st Yr	35.4	37.0	41.2
	Srs.	56.2	54.8	56.2
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	1 st Yr.	25.9	26.1	25.6
	Srs.	31.4	38.4	39.5
Received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance	1 st Yr	26.1	47.7	48.8
	Srs.	45.5	62.4	61.4
Worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, etc	1 st Yr.	1.8	8.2	8.2
	Srs.	5.8	14.8	16.2
Had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from yours	1 st Yr	26.4	43.0	47.2
	Srs.	28.9	40.9	45.1
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	1 st Yr	23.9	44.9	57.3
	Srs.	20.6	44.5	46.0

*Significant Difference in the means at the p<0.001 level (see Appendix B)

**others values (not shown) were *occasionally* and *never*

- One-third to one-half of UTPA students did not engage in the identified *good educational practices* to the extent that the comparable groups did. There was less interaction with faculty and with other students both inside and outside of class. Moreover, there was a significant difference between the groups even when there was a small percentage of students who did not engage *often/very often* in some of the activities; i.e., worked with faculty on other than coursework.
- Although not analyzed to determine the correlation between 1st year and senior students, there were several large percentage differences in the rates of response on some items. Seniors were likely to have had more interaction with faculty and other students except in those instances related to intellectual discussions; i.e., had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own. This result may be because of limited diversity among UTPA students of whom the majority are Hispanic.
- Moreover, the differences between 1st year and senior students were expected by the NSSE project staff: i.e., they wrote: *By deliberately selecting students at different levels, inferences can be drawn about the contrasts between the responses of “survivors” and “drop outs”* (NSSE Concept Paper, 2000).

Of the eleven items identified in Table 4 as *good educational practices*, four are oriented to behaviors **within** the classroom. The next group of statements show the extent of involvement with faculty and other students **outside** the classroom. The response rates were not significantly different from those of the comparable groups at either end of the response values. The means of the groups are shown in Appendix B.

With four exceptions, the extent of the different rates of response by seniors and 1st year students, however, are not very large within either the UTPA and the comparable and national groups. The exceptions for UTPA respondents follow:

- (1) 50.9% of freshmen, but 20.6% of the seniors *rewrote a paper or assignment several times*; (2) .9% of freshmen and 11.6% of seniors *participated in a community based project as part of a regular course*; (3) 4.5% and 10% of 1st year and senior respondents, respectively, *worked with a faculty member on a research project*; and (4) 25.7% and 34.8%, respectively, used electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment (email, list serve, chat group, etc.)

Table 4
Academic, Intellectual and Social Experiences
Most and Least % Often/Very Often

Activity (Item Values - often/very often)*		UTPA %	Comp. %	Nat'l %
Rewrote a paper or assignment several times	1 st Yr	50.9	44.0	42.2
	Srs.	20.6	27.1	26.5
Came to class unprepared	1 st Yr	2.7	6.8	8.1
	Srs.	9.1	8.3	10.2
Worked with other students on projects during class	1 st Yr	46.1	43.9	42.2
	Srs.	51.2	48.0	45.1
Used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment (list serve, chat room)	1 st Yr	25.7	29.5	33.4
	Srs.	34.8	32.9	35.1
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations.	1 st Yr	54.5	52.7	52.1
	Srs.	57.9	57.2	55.0
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	1 st Yr	54.0	57.4	58.4
	Srs.	60.3	64.7	65.2
Tutored or taught other students	1st Yr	18.6	11.2	12.7
	Srs.	14.3	17.6	17.5
Participated in a community based project as part of a regular course	1st Yr	.9	6.9	6.7
	Srs.	11.6	13.6	12.2
Discussed grades or assignments with An instructor	1 st Yr	36.3	43.4	43.2
	Srs.	41.3	51.1	51.2
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with faculty members outside of class	1st Yr	16.1	13.0	13.3
	Srs.	16.7	20.6	21.6
Worked with a faculty member on a research project	1st Yr	4.5	5.3	4.8
	Srs.	10.0	11.5	14.1

*Other values were *occasionally and never*

Some additional items relative to the **College Activities** section of *The College Student Report* address the expectations of the institution, either directly or indirectly, related to student engagement. For instance, as indicated by the question-***During this current school year, about how much reading and writing did you do?***-there is the suggestion of the degree to which the institution challenges students to engage in behaviors that are defined as good practices (Table 5).

**Table 5
Time Spent on Reading and Writing**

Activity*		UTPA %	Comp %	Nat'l %
*Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings				
Students reporting fewer than 5 and none	1 st Yr	30.4	14.8	12.3
	Srs	32.5	21.8	19.5
Students reporting between 5 and 10	1 st Yr	50.9	39.8	36.4
	Srs	41.9	38.5	36.5
Students reporting between 11 & 20, and more than 20	1 st yr	18.8	45.5	51.3
	Srs.	25.7	39.7	43.9
Number of books read on your own (not assigned)				
Students reporting fewer than 5 and none	1 st Yr	82.3	80.7	80.2
	Srs	67.3	72.4	72.8
Students reporting between 5 and 10	1 st Yr	8.8	12.7	13.5
	Srs	13.4	17.2	17.3
Students reporting between 11 & 20, and more than 20	1 st yr.	8.9	6.7	6.3
	Srs.	9.2	9.4	9.8
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more				
Students reporting fewer than 5 and none	1 st Yr	94.7	96.0	96.4
	Srs	91.6	90.3	89.0
Students reporting between 5 and 10, between 11 & 20, and more than 20	1 st yr.	5.3	4.1	3.6
	Srs.	8.4	9.7	10.0
*Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 20 pages				
Students reporting fewer than 5 and none	1 st Yr	38.9	26.7	15.2
	Srs	54.6	29.0	26.6
Students reporting between 5 and 10	1 st yr.	38.1	30.3	30.3
	Srs.	17.6	29.0	29.0
Students reporting between 11 & 20, and more than 20	1 st yr	23.0	43.0	54.8
	Srs.	27.7	42.0	44.4

*significant difference at the p<0.001 level

- 18.8% and 25.7% of UTPA 1st year and seniors read 11 or more assigned textbooks (item means were 2.88 and 3.04, respectively);
 - In the case of 1st year students, these response rates were less than one-half of the university's comparison group (45.5%; item means was 3.44)
- 38.9% of 1st year and 54.6% of senior UTPA respondents wrote 5 or fewer papers or reports that were less than 20 pages in length.
 - The data show differences at the p<0.001 level of significance between UTPA respondents and those of the two groups at the national level (Appendix B).

The exams given to students at UTPA were likely to have contained a mixture of multiple choice or short answer tests in contrast to having taken mostly essay or exams with open-ended questions/problems. The statement to which students were asked to respond was: **Mark the oval that best represents the nature of the examinations you have taken this year at this institution.**

Table 6
Nature of Exams

Activity		UTPA %	Comp %	Nat'l %
1=mostly multiple choice or short answer & 2	1 st yr	29.8	21.4	22.0
	Srs	24.3	17.8	15.9
3-4	1 st yr	59.4	51.6	48.5
	Srs	38.3	40.0	59.0
5, 6 to 7=mostly essay or open-ended problems	1 st yr	20.8	23.5	25.5
	Srs	37.4	32.6	35.9

- 37.4% of seniors from UTPA took mostly essay or tests with open-ended questions/problems at about the same rate as did respondents from national groups, but approximately one-fifth of UTPA 1st year students did so.

Mental Activities

According to NSSE, to gain insight into the student experience is to look at the kinds of intellectual and mental activities that institutions emphasize and are designed to enrich their college experience. This aspect of good educational practices is shown by the question: **During the current school year, to what extent has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?**

The activities listed represent some of the higher order skills of educational objectives in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (Table 7). A comparison of the means to determine if significant differences exist between the three groups is provided in Appendix B. In one instance—analyzing basic elements-- there is a significant difference at the $p < 0.001$ level; this is between UTPA 1st year students and the NSSE respondents at the national level. The means were 1.65 and 2.93, respectively, using the values of 4=quite a bit, 3=very much, 2=some and 1=very little.

Coursework emphasis for UTPA students, to a greater extent than the respondents from the comparable and national groups, seems to have focused more on the lower order mental activities. However, over 60% of the freshmen from the three groups indicated that their courses stressed the lowest mental function item, *memorization*.

**Table 7
Character of Mental Activities**

Coursework Emphasis *Response values =quite a bit/very much		UTPA %	Comp %	Nat'l %
Memorizing facts, ideas or methods from your courses and reading	1 st yr. Srs.	61.0 56.2	65.4 53.8	63.5 51.4
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory	1 st yr. Srs.	56.6 67.7	68.8 77.4	71.1 78.2
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences	1 st yr. Srs.	46.9 57.5	51.3 61.7	53.3 63.3
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods	1 st yr. Srs.	50.9 49.6	50.8 56.5	50.4 57.3
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	1 st yr. Srs.	49.6 61.1	59.2 71.2	61.9 71.2

*Other response values were *some* and *very little*

- There was a large variance between the percentage of UTPA senior respondents and the comparable and the national groups on the higher order mental activities: *making judgements about the value of information* (49.6%, 59.2% and 61.9%, respectively) and *applying theories or concepts to practical problems* (61.1%, 71.2% and 71.2%, respectively).

Time on Task

How students spend their time in college is a key indicator of students' involvement in their education and also predicts what they gain from it. Of the six time usage items, according to NSSE, three are positively correlated with other engagement items and self-reported educational and personal growth. These are *time devoted to preparing for class, extracurricular activities, and on-campus work*. Of the remaining three items, two are either not correlated or negatively associated with engagement in good educational practices, though the amount of time devoted to two of these, *working off-campus* and *caring for dependents*, may not be fully under the control of the student.

The question to which students responded was the following: **During the current school year, about how many hours do you spend in a typical week doing each of the following?**

Following in Table 8 are the activities and the amount of time respondents spent in each during a typical week. Several of the items show differences between UTPA respondents and the national groups at the $p < 0.001$ level of significance (Appendix B). The data show that UTPA students spent *less time studying and preparing for class* than their counterparts at the national level, but they spent *more time working off-campus* and *caring for family dependents* which are negatively correlated with good educational practices.

**Table 8
Time on Task**

Activity*		UTPA %	Comp %	Nat'l %
*Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, etc. related to your academic program)				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	27.4	11.9	9.6
	Srs.	21.5	11.7	10.9
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	40.7	28.0	24.7
	Srs.	30.6	27.2	25.2
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	25.7	40.4	41.6
	Srs.	29.8	38.3	38.2
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	6.3	19.6	24.2
	Srs.	18.3	22.8	25.6
Working for pay on campus				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	83.0	78.4	75.3
	Srs.	75.7	77.2	70.8
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	2.8	10.6	13.3
	Srs.	1.8	8.4	11.8
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	12.2	9.6	9.7
	Srs.	16.2	10.4	13.1
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	1.9	1.5	1.5
	Srs.	6.3	4.0	4.3
*Working for pay off-campus				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	42.9	58.4	69.0
	Srs.	29.7	35.7	44.9
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	4.5	6.1	5.4
	Srs.	8.5	6.2	6.5
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	18.8	14.9	11.7
	Srs.	18.6	19.0	17.3
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	33.9	20.6	13.9
	Srs.	43.2	39.2	31.3
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, st. gov't, sports, etc.)				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	89.1	64.8	58.9
	Srs.	81.3	70.4	64.3
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	6.4	17.4	20.2
	Srs.	11.6	13.9	17.0
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	1.8	12.6	14.7
	Srs.	4.5	10.3	12.6
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	2.7	5.2	6.3
	Srs.	2.7	5.4	6.1
*Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, playing games, etc.)				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	23.0	14.9	12.8
	Srs.	33.9	21.3	18.6
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	38.1	28.9	28.1
	Srs.	38.8	32.7	31.5
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	24.7	35.5	37.5
	Srs.	19.0	32.4	34.7
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	14.2	20.8	21.7
	Srs.	8.2	13.6	15.2
*Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)				
Students reporting 5 or fewer hours/wk	1 st yr	50.0	78.1	85.1
	Srs.	36.4	64.1	71.4
Students reporting 6-10 hours	1 st yr	18.2	7.7	5.5
	Srs.	12.7	7.9	6.9
Students reporting 11-20 hours/wk	1 st yr	16.4	6.7	4.4
	Srs.	18.7	9.4	7.7
Students reporting 21 or more hours/wk	1 st yr	15.4	7.5	4.9
	Srs.	32.2	18.7	14.0

*Means are significantly different at the p<0.001 level between the UTPA and national groups (see Appendix B)

- 68.1% of 1st year UTPA students and 52.1% of the seniors spent 10 or less hours a week *preparing for class* (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to their academic program). The comparable group response rates were 39.9% and 38.9%, respectively, on this factor.
- 83.0% and 75.7% of first-year and senior respondents, respectively, *worked 5 hours or less for pay on-campus* so that it is assumed that this group or a large portion of this group did not work on-campus (e.g. There was no response value on the survey for students who did not work on-campus at all [0 hours])
- 52.7% (1st year) and 61.8% (seniors) of UTPA respondents, *worked 21 hours or more a week off-campus* .
- 89.1% of freshmen and 81.3% of seniors spent 5 hours or less *participating in co-curricular activities* (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.); the comparable group response rates were 64.8% and 70.4%, respectively.
- 61.1% and 72.7% of UTPA first year and senior students, respectively, spent 10 or fewer hours a *week relaxing and socializing* (watching TV, partying, exercising, playing games, etc.); this compared to 43.8% and 54%, respectively, of the comparable group.
- 50% of the 1st year students *provided care for dependents living with them* (parents, children, spouse, etc.) at 5 or fewer hours per week; but 31.8% spent 11 or more hours in this activity.
 - With respect to UTPA seniors, 36.4% assisted their families for 5 or fewer hours, but 50.9% spent 11 or more hours a week in this activity.

Undergraduate Educational Programs: According to NSSE, the extent to which programs are designed to complement coursework in the student’s major emphasizes the institution’s efforts to enrich the college experience for its students. Included below in Table 9 are 3 of the 8 programs listed to which a substantial proportion of either the 1st year or senior group answered “Yes” to the items in the section(see Appendix B for the complete list).

The question to be answered was: **In thinking about your undergraduate program as a whole (including your major or expected major), which of the following have you done or plan to do before you graduate from this institution? Fill in the oval that best describes your situation.**

Table 9
Educational Programs

Variable (Response value = Yes*)		UTPA %	Comp. %	Nat'l %
Practicum, Internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical experience	1 st Yr	61.1	74.7	78.5
	Srs	66.9	72.7	73.5
Community service or volunteer work	1 st Yr	54.9	64.6	68.1
	Srs	59.2	60.3	62.9
Foreign Language coursework	1 st Yr	58.4	40.8	44.3
	Srs	35.0	38.0	42.5

*Other values were *undecided* and *no*

- 1st year (61.1%) and senior (66.9%) UTPA respondents intended to become involved or have been involved in practicum, internships, etc. The percentages for the respondents from the comparison group were 74.7% and 72.7%, respectively.
- 54.9% of the UTPA 1st year students expected to participate or participated in community service and volunteer work which compared to 64.6% of the respondents from comparable institutions. The response rates of the seniors were about equal to the percentage at the national level: 59.2% and 60.3%, respectively.
- 58.4% of the UTPA freshmen, but 40.8% of the comparison group expected to participate in foreign language coursework, but only 35% of the UTPA seniors and 38% of the comparable institutions did.

Educational and Personal Growth

The section related to Educational and Personal Growth includes areas in which students' indicate the extent to which their education has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development. According to Kuh (2000), there are several principal components of the three factors identified: (1) personal and social development; (2) general education; and, (3) practical competence.

Comprising the *personal and social development* factor are seven items that represent outcomes that characterize interpersonally effective, ethically grounded, socially responsible, and civic minded individuals. The second factor, *general education*, is composed of four items that are earmarks of a well-educated person; and, the final factor has only three items and is labeled *practical competence*, to reflect the skill areas needed to be economically independent in today's post-college job market (p.8).

In addition, Kuh (2000) reports that the patterns of scores reported by students vary across majors and length of study. However, this particular report does not provide an analysis of the data by enrollment in the various colleges. The data may be extracted from the NSSE diskette which can be duplicated for faculty or staff who might be interested in further analysis of these factors.

Following in Table 10 are the responses to the question: **To what extent has your college education contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?**

Table 10
Contributions To Development

Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Development (Response value = quite a bit/very much*)		UTPA %	Comp. %	Nat'l %
General Education				
Acquiring a broad general education	1 st Yr	76.8	78.5	78.5
	Srs	83.5	86.5	85.9
Writing clearly and effectively	1 st Yr	73.4	69.1	67.6
	Srs	81.8	72.2	76.4
Speaking clearly and effectively	1 st Yr	69.9**	56.9	53.1
	Srs	75.2	73.3	71.3
Thinking critically and analytically	1 st Yr	79.5	74.2	75.6
	Srs	76.8	85.2	86.0
Practical Competence				
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge & skills	1 st Yr	39.3	45.5	46.3
	Srs	59.5	71.4	69.9
Analyzing quantitative problems	1 st Yr	61.2	51.7	53.9
	Srs	66.1	65.9	66.3
Using computing & information technology	1 st Yr	69.1	52.9	58.8
	Srs	76.9	68.5	68.4
Personal and Social Development				
Working effectively with others	1 st Yr	63.7	64.3	63.4
	Srs	78.5	75.7	75.7
Voting in elections	1 st Yr	12.4	16.4	16.2
	Srs	23.9	19.3	18.3
Learning effectively on your own	1 st Yr	67.3	68.8	70.6
	Srs	81.7	76.3	77.5
Understanding yourself	1 st Yr	63.7	64.2	65.6
	Srs	69.4	70.0	71.5
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	1 st Yr	61.9	52.0	51.2
	Srs	59.5	55.9	54.7
Being honest and truthful	1 st Yr	69.9	62.0	61.3
	Srs	69.4	61.4	61.2
Contributing to the welfare of the community	1 st Yr	34.6	34.7	35.5
	Srs	38.0	43.8	43.9

*Other values: *some and very little* **difference at the p<0.001 level of significance (Appendix B)

- Based on the percentages within the *general education* factor, the items indicate greater gains by seniors than by 1st year students.
 - UTPA freshmen believed they gained on most of the four items as compared to the two national comparison groups. One, *speaking clearly and effectively*, was significantly different at the p<0.001 level from freshmen of the comparable group.
 - The results for the UTPA seniors, on the other hand, seem to be almost equal to those of the respondents at the national level.
- On three items of the *personal and social* factor, UTPA seniors showed a greater gain than did 1st year students, although their response rates did not vary widely from those of the national groups. The three items were *working effectively with others*, *learning effectively on your own* and *understanding yourself*.

- Response rates of two of the items for both 1st year and seniors at UTPA, were similar to the national comparison groups; all reported less growth—*voting in elections* and *contributing to the welfare of the community*.
- There appear to be substantial differences in the responses of UTPA 1st year students compared to the national groups' response rates on two of the items of the factor *practical competence*.
 - 69.1% of the UTPA freshmen, compared to 52.9% (comparison group) showed greater gains on *using computing and information technology*; and on *analyzing quantitative problems*, the rates were 61.2% and 51.7% respectively.
 - On the former item, UTPA seniors also showed a greater positive response rate, 76.9%, compared to 68.5%.
- On the other hand, 59.5% of UTPA seniors believed they were *acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills* compared to 71.4% of the comparison group.
 - This item was also lowest among UTPA freshmen, 39.3%, which compared to their counterpart university respondents' rate of 45.5%.

Opinions About Your School

The items found in this section represent students' views of important aspects of the atmosphere of their college; thus, the dimensions of the items make distinctive contributions to the institution's learning environment. Moreover, there is an emphasis on philosophy and attitudes they see that the college encompasses and the quality of certain relations.

Principal components of these items showed two factors: *student satisfactions with college* and *personal relations* and *campus climate*. Thus, Table 11 reflects the item means for students' perception of their institution's environment; e.g., their level of satisfaction of interactions with others and the overall college experience. Campus climate (Table 12) is a broad construct that reflects the degree to which students believe their schools' programs, policies and practices are supportive and instrumental in helping them attain their personal and educational goals.

Relative to opinions about the institution, one of the questions was as follows: **Thinking about your experience at this institution this year, fill in the oval that best represents the quality of the relationships among people that are typical at this college.**

Table 11
Item Means of Student Satisfaction With College and Personal Relations

ITEM		UTPA	Comp	Nat'l
Relationships with other students 1=Unfriendly, Unsupportive, Sense of Alienation 7=Friendly, Supportive, Sense of Belonging	1 st Yr. Srs.	5.31 5.21	5.41 5.44	5.48 5.44
Relationships with faculty members 1=Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic 7=Available, Helpful, Sympathetic	1 st Yr. Srs.	4.86 4.98	5.18 5.37	5.22 5.38
Relationship with Administrative Personnel & Offices 1=Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid 7=Helpful, Considerate, Flexible	1 st Yr. Srs.	4.71 4.03	4.52 4.27	4.58 4.30
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution? (Values = Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent)	1 st Yr. Srs.	2.97 3.02	3.11 3.17	3.17 3.21
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending? (Values = Definitely No, Probably No, Probably Yes, Definitely Yes)	1 st Yr. Srs.	3.16 3.01	3.11 3.07	3.18 3.11

- According to the UTPA means of both 1st year and senior respondents, *relationships with peers* tend to be friendly and supportive and convey a sense of belonging (i.e., approximately 52% of their responses were in the 6 or 7 value range).
- With respect to the *relationships with faculty members*, the means of both 1st year and UTPA seniors were somewhat lower than those of their peers at the national level; they perceive faculty as being somewhat available, helpful and sympathetic (i.e., 38.4% 1st year and 46.3% seniors responded toward the high-range of 6 and 7 compared to 46.3% and 54.6%, respectively, at the comparable institutions).
- Regarding their *relationship with administrative personnel and offices*, the seniors' perceptions were less positive than those of the freshmen (i.e. 61.1% and 44.6%, respectively, responded at the lower range of the scale: 1 to 4. These figures compared to 47.4% and 53.4%, respectively, at the comparable universities).
- 74.4% of 1st year and 74.2% of seniors were generally satisfied with their college experiences; (e.g. they rated UTPA as "fair" or "good") and, about 1/5th of both groups felt their experience was excellent.
- If they could start over again at UTPA, 87.7% (freshmen) and 77.3% (seniors) would (probably yes and definitely yes) choose to attend UTPA again; about 1/3rd of both groups answered "definitely yes".

As indicated previously, the second factor, *campus climate*, reflects the degree to which students perceive the university's programs, policies and practices are supportive of and instrumental in helping them attain their personal and educational goals. The question related to the campus climate factor was the following: **Again thinking about your experience at this institution during the current school year, to what extent does your college emphasize each of the following?** The responses are noted below in Table 12.

**Table 12
Opinions About The Campus Climate**

Opinions (Item Values: 4 = quite a bit, 3 = very much)		UTPA %	Comp. %	Nat'l %
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	1 st Yr Srs.	74.4 76.9	77.5 78.4	79.7 78.7
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	1 st yr Srs.	65.5 58.6	71.3 64.7	72.6 64.7
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	1 st yr Srs.	53.0 36.7	46.5 39.3	47.8 38.5
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	1 st yr Srs.	44.3 24.8	30.9 22.8	30.1 22.3
Providing the support you need to thrive socially.	1 st yr Srs.	46.9 24.0	40.9 30.6	43.4 31.9

*other values were 2 = some, 1 = very little

- Both freshmen and seniors perceive the institution as *encouraging students to spend time studying and on academic coursework*, but less so as *providing the support needed to help them succeed academically*.
- Response rates between freshmen and seniors are widely disparate on the factors related to non-academic areas
 - Seniors are less likely to perceive the institution as *helping them with non-academic responsibilities* and *with providing support to help them socially*.

Section IV Summary of Findings

UTPA students have been described as “non-traditional”; that is, they are older, from an ethnic minority, socio-economically disadvantaged, and they are more likely to be first generation college students. Moreover, they are commonly expected to be under-prepared for college level coursework and may be in need of academic support services. The majority are commuter students, and, generally, they must work to help support their families and their educational goals.

For the most part, the UTPA participants of the NSSE study reflected some of characteristics of the non traditional student in that the majority (88%) were of Hispanic origin compared to the national sample (6.4%). Although the 1st year students were approximately the same age as the national sample (almost 90% were 19 years of age or younger), seniors were older (62% were over 24 years of age compared to 26.9% of the national sample). Fewer of the local group were enrolled full time; 80.5% of the freshmen, and 70% of the seniors which was approximately 12% less than students from the national sample. Additionally, over 80% lived at home with family members and were within driving distance to the University; e.g. commuter students.

Given the contrasting background information about the respondents, it was anticipated that the survey questions would generate disparate views about the college experience between UTPA students and their counterparts from the NSSE comparable university group (Carnegie Classification of Master's Universities and Colleges, Levels 1 and 2). This was indeed the case on certain sections of the questionnaire and is evidenced by mean score differences at the $p < 0.001$ level of significance.

On many items the data also revealed differences in the response rates between the freshmen and seniors, a factor taken into consideration by the researchers. By deliberately selecting students at different levels, they believed that inferences could be drawn about the contrasts between the responses of *survivors* and *drop outs* (e.g., generally survivors have had more successful experiences than drop outs at any given institution).

Student/Faculty Contact: Research has shown that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development. Student/faculty contact, active learning and prompt feedback are also considered important principles for measuring student engagement.

The results relative to these factors show significant differences ($p < 0.001$ level of significance*) between UTPA students and those at the national level who participated in the study. UTPA students were not inclined to respond positively to the items following below. They were less likely

- *to ask questions in class or contribute to class discussions;
- *to engage in making class presentations, especially the freshmen group;
- *to use e-mail to a great extent to communicate with their instructors;
- *to talk about career plans with a faculty member or an advisor
- *to receive prompt feedback from faculty about their academic performance;
- *to work with faculty on activities outside the classroom, such as committees, orientation, organizations, etc. or on research projects;
- *to discuss ideas from their reading or classes with faculty members outside of class.

For the most part, UTPA students do not interact with faculty, either inside or outside of class. Moreover, they tend to be fairly neutral in their view of faculty. On a scale of 1 (Unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic) to 7 (available, helpful, sympathetic), the means were 4.86 (1st year) and 4.98 (seniors) which compared to the national sample of 5.22 and 5.38, respectively.

(*Note: Throughout this summary, items with asterisks show significant differences between UTPA respondents and those of the participants from the comparable group of institutions)

Time on Task/Expectations/Diversity: These factors have been shown to be important principles of student engagement. They channel students' energies toward appropriate activities and encourage them to participate at an active level.

Time on Task: Some of the factors that need more attention from students may be unreachable, through no fault of their own or because they are not under the student's control. Others may be a matter of familiarizing students with the expectations of the university environment through freshmen courses, study skills development, mentoring, etc.

- Students spent **less** time than respondents at the national level
 - * preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, etc. related to their academic program);
 - *participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, sports, etc.)
 - *relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, playing games, etc.)
- On the other hand, they spent **more** time
 - *working for pay off-campus
 - *providing care for dependents they live with (parents, children, spouse, etc.)

Expectations: The degree to which the institution is seen to challenge students to engage in behaviors that are defined as good practices appear to be less than shown by respondents at the comparable group of institutions. UTPA students were likely

- *to have been assigned fewer textbooks, book or book-length packs of course reading
- *to have prepared fewer papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- to have read books on their own (not assigned)
- to have been given examinations that were mostly multiple choice or short answer exams compared to mostly essay or open-ended problems
- not to be expected to use higher order thinking skills; i.e., indications were that their courses stressed memorization as opposed to the application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.

Diversity: Important to student learning is an institutional environment that is perceived by students as inclusive and affirming. The factors following below show the extent to which UTPA encourages participation in the learning process among its students. Responses in some cases were significantly different at the $p < 0.001$ level when compared to those at the national level. UTPA students were less likely

- *to have had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from theirs;
- *to have had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own;
- to work with other students on projects during class;
- to have tutored or taught other students, or to have participated in a community based project as part of a regular course;
- *to work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments; however, seniors were more likely to do so than freshmen

Overall, however, students reported that relationships with their peers tended to be positive.

- On a scale of 1 (unfriendly, unsupportive and sense of alienation) to 7 (friendly, supportive, and a sense of belonging), the mean score was 5.31 (freshmen) and 5.21 (seniors). At the national level the means were 5.48 and 5.44, respectively.

Educational and Personal Development: The items related to these factors characterize the extent to which students' education contributed to interpersonal effectiveness. Response rates on this section were fairly consistent with those of respondents at the national level, save one, and most were positive. Students believed they

- are acquiring a broad general education, are learning to write and speak clearly and effectively, and are learning or had learned to think critically and analytically.
- are acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills (the freshmen less so than seniors); are learning to analyze quantitative problems and are becoming competent in using computing and information technology.
- there is less growth in civic and social responsibilities such as voting in elections and contributing to the welfare of the community.
- On the other hand, they believed they are
 - learning to work effectively with others and on their own
 - more able to understand themselves and people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Opinions About UTPA: The items related to this factor represent students' views of important aspects of the learning environment. There is an emphasis on philosophy and attitudes they see that the college encompasses.

The majority of the students do not see the institution as helping them cope with non-academic responsibilities nor as providing the support they need to thrive socially. Furthermore, seniors, more so than the freshmen, are of the opinion that the institutional climate does not necessarily encourage contact among students from different economic, social and racial or ethnic backgrounds.

The respondents believe the college supports an environment that encourages students to spend significant amounts of time studying, and on academic work. Although to a lesser degree, they also view the institution as providing the support they need to succeed academically.

Students appear to be positive about their associations with other students, but they are fairly neutral in expressing their relationships with faculty. On the other hand, they are less than satisfied with *Administrative Personnel and Offices*. On a scale of 1 (unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid) to 7 (helpful, considerate, flexible) the mean average was 4.4 which is equal to the mean at the national level. The response rate, however, showed that 61.1% of the seniors rated this from 1 to 4 (the lower end of the scale), and 44.6% of the freshmen marked this range. The difference between the seniors and freshmen may be the negative experiences which eventually add up as students progress through the system.

Almost 75% of the students who responded to the survey were generally satisfied with their college experiences and approximately two-thirds would choose to attend UTPA again if they were to start over. The latter item is supported by the data about student attendance/enrollment at UTPA: 65.3% of the seniors began their college career at UTPA and 34.7% started at another institution (technical, community college, another 4-year institution).

References

From

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Conceptual Framework and Overview of Psychometric
Properties**

By

**George D. Kuh
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning**

In The

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2000 Institutional Report**

September 2000

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Appendix A

List of Carnegie Classification

**Master's Universities and Colleges
Levels I and II**

Carnegie Classification: Doctoral Universities I

Institution	City	State
Adelphi University	Garden City	NY
American University	Washington	DC
Bowling Green State University	Bowling Green	OH
Catholic University of America	Washington	DC
Drexel University	Philadelphia	PA
Loyola University Chicago	Chicago	IL
Miami University	Oxford	OH
Northern Illinois University	DeKalb	IL
Polytechnic University	Brooklyn	NY
The University of Texas at Dallas	Dallas	TX
University of Missouri-Kansas City	Kansas City	MO

Carnegie Classification: Doctoral Universities II

Institution	City	State
Clark University	Worcester	MA
George Mason University	Fairfax	VA
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis	Indianapolis	IN
North Dakota State University	Fargo	ND
Pepperdine University	Malibu	CA
Seton Hall University	South Orange	NJ
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry	Syracuse	NY
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	Baltimore	MD
University of Massachusetts Lowell	Lowell	MA
University of Missouri-St. Louis	St. Louis	MO
University of Montana	Missoula	MT
University of North Dakota	Grand Forks	ND
University of South Dakota	Vermillion	SD

Carnegie Classification: Master's Universities and Colleges I

Institution	City	State
Abilene Christian University	Abilene	TX
Adams State College	Alamosa	CO
Alaska Pacific University	Anchorage	AK
Appalachian State University	Boone	NC
Aurora University	Aurora	IL
Austin Peay State University	Clarksville	TN
Baruch College of the City University of New York	New York	NY
Boise State University	Boise	ID
Brenau University	Gainesville	GA
Brooklyn College of the City University of New York	Brooklyn	NY
Butler University	Indianapolis	IN
California State University, Bakersfield	Bakersfield	CA
California State University, Los Angeles	Los Angeles	CA
California State University, San Bernardino	San Bernardino	CA
California State University, San Marcos	San Marcos	CA
Canisius College	Buffalo	NY
City College of the City University of New York	New York	NY

Carnegie Classification: Master's Universities and Colleges I

(continued)

Institution	City	State
College of Charleston	Charleston	SC
College of St. Scholastica	Duluth	MN
College of Staten Island of the City University New York	Staten Island	NY
Dominican University	River Forest	IL
Drake University	Des Moines	IA
Eastern Kentucky University	Richmond	KY
Edgewood College	Madison	WI
Elmira College	Elmira	NY
Framingham State College	Framingham	MA
Georgia College & State University	Milledgeville	GA
Georgia Southwestern State University	Americus	GA
Hunter College of the City University of New York	New York	NY
Indiana University Northwest	Gary	IN
Indiana University Southeast	New Albany	IN
Indiana Wesleyan University	Marion	IN
Kean University	Union	NJ
La Salle University	Philadelphia	PA
Lehman College of the City University of New York	Bronx	NY
Lewis University	Romeoville	IL
Loyola College in Maryland	Baltimore	MD
Loyola University New Orleans	New Orleans	LA
Madonna University	Livonia	MI
Marshall University	Huntington	WV
Marywood University	Scranton	PA
Meredith College	Raleigh	NC
Monmouth University	Long Branch	NJ
Montclair State University	Upper Montclair	NJ
Moorhead State University	Moorhead	MN
Morehead State University	Morehead	KY
Northeastern Illinois University	Chicago	IL
Northern Michigan University	Marquette	MI
Northwestern State University of Louisiana	Natchitoches	LA
Norwich University	Northfield	VT
Olivet Nazarene University	Kankakee	IL
Our Lady of the Lake University	San Antonio	TX
Pacific Lutheran University	Tacoma	WA
Queens College of the City University of New York	Flushing	NY
Radford University	Radford	VA
Rockhurst University	Kansas City	MO
Sacred Heart University	Fairfield	CT
Saint Francis College	Loretto	PA
Saint Michael's College	Olchester	VT
Saint Xavier University	Chicago	IL
Salisbury State University	Salisbury	MD
Samford University	Birmingham	AL
Santa Clara University	Santa Clara	CA
Seattle Pacific University	Seattle	WA

Carnegie Classification: Master's Universities and Colleges I

(continued)

Institution	City	State
Slippery Rock University	Slippery Rock	PA
South Dakota State University	Brookings	SD
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	Edwardsville	IL
Southwest Texas State University	San Marcos	TX
Suffolk University	Boston	MA
The College of New Jersey	Ewing	NJ
The University of Texas at Brownsville	Brownsville	TX
The University of Texas at El Paso	El Paso	TX
The University of Texas at San Antonio	San Antonio	TX
The University of Texas at Tyler	Tyler	TX
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin	Odessa	TX
The University of Texas-Pan American	Edinburg	TX
The William Paterson University of New Jersey	Wayne	NJ
Towson University	Towson	MD
Truman State University	Kirksville	MO
University of Central Arkansas	Conway	AR
University of Dubuque	Dubuque	IA
University of Massachusetts Boston	Boston	MA
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth	North Dartmouth	MA
University of Minnesota Duluth	Duluth	MN
University of North Carolina at Wilmington	Wilmington	NC
University of Richmond	Richmond	VA
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	La Crosse	WI
University of Wisconsin-Stout	Menomonie	WI
Villanova University	Villanova	PA
William Carey College	Hattiesburg	MS

Carnegie Classification: Master's Universities and Colleges II

Institution	City	State
Baker University	Baldwin	KS
California State University, Monterey Bay	Seaside	CA
College of Notre Dame of Maryland	Baltimore	MD
College of St. Catherine	St. Paul	MN
Eastern College	St. Davids	PA
Elon College	Elon College	NC
Indiana University Kokomo	Kokomo	IN
Longwood College	Farmville	VA
MidAmerica Nazarene University	Olathe	KS
North Central College	Naperville	IL
Pfeiffer University	Misenheimer	NC
Point Loma Nazarene University	San Diego	CA
Southern Arkansas University	Magnolia	AR
St. Edward's University	Austin	TX
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore	Princess Anne	MD
University of Southern Indiana	Evansville	IN
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay	Green Bay	WI
Weber State University	Ogden	UT

Appendix B

Summary of Item Means

Summary of Item Means

In student development literature, research shows that the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities is the single best predictor of their learning and personal development. Thus, the major indicators which measure student engagement are based on several principals, namely: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. In addition, important to students learning are institutional environments that are perceived by students as inclusive and affirming and where expectations for performance are clearly communicated and set at reasonable high levels. Thus, the most educationally effective colleges and universities—those that add value—are able to channel students' energies toward appropriate activities and encourage them to participate in them at an active level.

NSSE has offered some guidelines for interpreting the differences in means of the items and for using the data from the survey. The following is taken directly from the *NSSE Means Summary Report*:

Mean: an arithmetic average of all responses on a particular item. Means are provided for UTPA, its comparison group, and the national sample. The comparison group mean differences were calculated by subtracting the consortium mean from your institution's mean on each item. Likewise, national mean differences are the difference of UTPA's mean minus the national mean. Mean differences are used for calculating significance level and effect size.

Class: Responses to each item are reported for first-year students and seniors.

Variables: Each of the items from *The College Report* are listed and include the means and mean comparison information where applicable. The report also provides the detailed frequency distributions of the various responses to each variable.

Statistical Analysis: Any mean difference that is statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level is identified. This indicates that the difference between UTPA's mean score and the comparison group or national mean on that item would not have occurred by chance 99.9% of the time. This level is a more stringent cut-off "given the very large sample sizes of the comparison groups and national sample."

- **Effect Size:** The effect size is an indicator of the magnitude of the difference between means. It is found by dividing the mean difference by the standard deviation of the mean of the group with which the institution is being compared (i.e., comparison group and national sample). An effect size between 0.2 to 0.5 is considered small, 0.5 to 0.8 is moderate, and 0.8 and higher is large. It is also important to note the sign on the effect size. A positive sign mean that UTPA's mean was greater, thus showing an affirmative result for the institution. A negative sign indicates UTPA lags behind the comparison group, suggesting that the student behavior or institutional practice represented by the item warrants attention. There is an exception to this interpretation where the negative sign is preferred.

Question: In your experience at this institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

Academic, Intellectual, and Social Experiences

Variable Values 1=never, 2=occasionally, 3=often, 4=very often		UTPA Mean	Comp. Group Mean	Effect Size*	Nat'l Mean	Effect Size**
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	1 st Yr.	2.39	2.75	-0.43	2.75	-0.43
	Srs.	2.74	3.07	-0.40	3.06	-0.37
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor or other students	1 st Yr.	2.12	2.61	-0.49	2.75	-0.65
	Srs.	2.30	2.68	-0.38	2.83	-0.54
Made a class presentation	1 st Yr.	1.91	2.19	-0.34	2.14	
	Srs.	2.92	2.81		2.75	
Rewrote a paper several or assignment several times	1 st Yr.	2.59	2.43		2.39	
	Srs.	2.02	2.08		2.07	
Came to class unprepared	1 st Yr.	1.46	1.66	-0.32	1.72	-0.41
	Srs.	1.66	1.78		1.84	
Worked with other students on projects during class	1 st Yr.	2.43	2.45		2.42	
	Srs.	2.57	2.55		2.49	
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments	1 st Yr.	2.12	2.29		2.39	-0.32
	Srs.	2.64	2.68		2.71	
Tutored or taught other students	1 st Yr.	1.69	1.63		1.68	
	Srs.	1.78	1.82		1.88	
Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	1 st Yr.	1.19	1.36		1.35	
	Srs.	1.55	1.61		1.57	
Used an electronic medium (e-mail, list-serve, chat group, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	1 st Yr.	1.88	2.05		2.15	
	Srs.	2.06	2.16		2.22	
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	1 st Yr.	2.36	2.47		2.47	
	Srs.	2.50	2.63		2.63	
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	1 st Yr.	1.93	2.09		2.09	
	Srs.	2.09	2.36		2.38	-0.32
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with faculty members outside of class	1 st Yr.	1.56	1.69		1.71	
	Srs.	1.87	1.96		1.98	
Received prompt feedback from faculty on academic performance	1 st Yr.	2.02	2.46	-0.53	2.49	-0.56
	Srs.	2.43	2.73	-0.37	2.71	-0.35
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	1 st Yr.	2.56	2.59		2.57	
	Srs.	2.75	2.68		2.65	
Worked with faculty member on a research project	1 st Yr.	1.19	1.29		1.28	
	Srs.	1.40	1.50		1.58	
Worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities ,etc)	1 st Yr.	1.18	1.39		1.40	-0.32
	Srs.	1.36	1.62		1.66	-0.34
Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	1 st Yr.	2.68	2.72		2.74	
	Srs.	2.76	2.87		2.88	
Had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from yours.	1 st Yr.	1.95	2.41	-0.47	2.51	-0.57
	Srs.	2.04	2.40	-0.38	2.49	-0.47
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	1 st Yr.	1.93	2.46	-0.52	2.53	-0.59
	Srs.	1.97	2.48	-0.52	2.52	-0.56

Note: In each table or chart, the asterisks reflect the following:

*T-tests: institution vs. comparison group means (without your institution's data); 2-tailed, p<pp<0p<0.001

**T-tests: institution vs. national means (without your institution's data); 2-tailed, p<pp<0p<0.001.

Question: During this current school year, about how much reading and writing did you do?

Reading and Writing

Variable Values 1=none 2=fewer than 5 , 3=betw. 5 & 10, , 4=betw 11 & 20, 5= more than 20		UTPA Mean	Comp Group Mean	Effect Size*	Nat'l Mean	Effect Size**
Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	1 st Yr.	2.88	3.44	-0.60	3.55	-0.73
	Srs.	3.04	3.31		3.40	-0.36
Number of books read on your own (not assigned)	1 st Yr.	1.99	2.02		2.03	
	Srs.	2.08	2.19		2.21	
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	1 st Yr.	1.30	1.24		1.23	
	Srs.	1.60	1.64		1.67	
Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 20 pages	1 st Yr.	2.85	3.54	-0.68	3.59	-0.73
	Srs.	2.72	3.28	-0.50	3.35	-0.56

Question: Mark the oval that best represents the nature of the examinations you have taken this year at this institution.

Nature of Exams

Variable Values 1=mostly multiple choice or short answer to 7=mostly essay or open-ended problems		UTPA Mean	Comp Group Mean		Nat'l Mean	
Nature of the examinations taken this year at this institution	1 st yr	3.62	3.74		3.79	
	Srs	3.92	4.22		4.41	

Question: During the current school year, to what extent has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?

Character of Mental Activities

Variable Values 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much		UTPA Mean	Comp Group Mean	Effect Size*	Nat'l Mean	Effect Size**
Memorizing facts, ideas or methods from your courses and reading so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	1 st Yr.	2.76	2.85		2.81	
	Srs.	2.67	2.63		2.57	
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	1 st Yr.	2.65	2.89		2.93	-0.35
	Srs.	2.88	3.08		3.10	
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	1 st Yr.	2.38	2.57		2.61	
	Srs.	2.63	2.78		2.82	
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	1 st Yr.	2.52	2.54		2.53	
	Srs.	2.48	2.68		2.69	
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	1 st Yr.	2.55	2.73		2.79	
	Srs.	2.79	3.0		3.01	

Question: During the current school year, about how many hours do you spend in a typical week doing each of the following?

Weekly Activities

Variable Values 1=5 or fewer hrs/wk, 2=6-10 hrs/wk, 3=11-15 hrs/wk, 4=16-20 hrs/wk, 5=21-25 hrs/wk, 6=26-30 hrs/wk, 7=30+ hrs/wk		UTPA Mean	Comp Group Mean	Effect Size*	Nat'l Mean	Effect Size**
Preparing for class (studying, reading, written, lab work, rehearsing, etc., related to your academic program)	1 st Yr. Srs.	2.28 2.93	3.18 3.29	-0.58	3.40 3.43	-0.70
Working for pay on campus	1 st Yr. Srs.	1.36 1.77	1.40 1.54		1.44 1.65	
Working for pay off-campus	1 st Yr. Srs.	3.35 4.0	2.49 3.64	0.41	2.06 3.18	0.70 0.35
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, publications, student government, social frat/soro., intercollegiate or /intramural sports, etc.)	1 st Yr. Srs.	1.22 1.36	1.72 1.65	-0.39	1.85 1.77	-0.47
Relaxing & socializing (watching TV, partying, exercising, playing games, etc.)	1 st Yr. Srs.	2.61 2.27	3.17 2.75	-0.32 -0.31	3.24 2.88	-0.37 -0.38
Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)	1 st Yr. Srs.	2.39 3.36	1.64 2.35	0.50 0.47	1.43 2.04	0.75 0.67

Question: In thinking about your undergraduate program as a whole (including your major or expected major), which of the following have you done or plan to do before you graduate from this institution? Fill in the oval that best describes your situation. (This item was not analyzed for a mean score since the response values were yes, no, or undecided. Percentage rates of these are included for UTPA, comparable institutions and the national levels below.)

Variable		Responses	UTPA	Compar able Group	National
			%	%	%
Practicum, Internship, filed experience, co-op experience, or clinical experience	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	20.4 18.6 61.1	15.8 9.5 74.7	14.0 7.6 78.5
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	9.9 23.1 66.9	6.3 21.0 72.7	5.3 21.2 73.5
Community service or volunteer work	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	25.7 19.5 54.9	21.1 14.3 64.6	19.4 12.4 68.1
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	10.8 30.0 59.2	9.2 30.5 60.3	8.0 29.1 62.9
Interdisciplinary coursework	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	56.4 18.2 25.5	41.3 19.7 38.9	39.2 17.3 43.5
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	17.8 34.7 47.5	13.9 36.2 49.8	11.9 33.0 55.1
Foreign Language coursework	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	16.8 24.8 58.4	21.4 37.7 40.8	19.9 35.8 44.3
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	13.3 51.7 35.0	6.3 55.7 38.0	4.9 52.6 42.5
Study abroad	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	30.4 34.8 34.8	34.0 39.6 26.4	32.6 35.2 32.2
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	9.2 77.5 13.3	7.9 79.2 12.9	6.7 76.7 16.6
Independent study or self-designed major	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	29.7 43.2 27.0	32.5 52.2 15.2	33.2 50.9 15.9
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	11.7 63.3 25.0	8.3 65.2 26.5	6.8 63.1 30.1
Culminating senior experience (comprehensive exam, capstone course, thesis, project, etc.)	1 st Year	Undecided No Yes	41.1 30.4 28.6	44.3 19.3 36.3	42.8 17.1 40.1
	Seniors	Undecided No Yes	19.3 50.4 30.3	10.9 36.5 52.6	9.0 36.0 55.0

Educational and Personal

Identifies areas which the students' education has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development.

Question: To what extent has your college education contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Development*

Variable Values 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much		UTPA Mean	Comp. Group Mean	Nat'l Mean	Effect Size
Acquiring a broad general education	1 st year	3.13	3.10	3.11	
	Seniors	3.25	3.34	3.33	
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	1 st year	2.39	2.44	2.47	
	Seniors	2.78	3.04	3.00	
Writing clearly and effectively	1 st year	3.05	2.92	2.88	
	Seniors	3.12	3.10	3.09	
Speaking clearly and effectively	1 st year	2.94	2.67	2.59	0.37
	Seniors	2.98	3.03	2.98	
Thinking critically and analytically	1 st year	3.09	3.02	3.05	
	Seniors	3.16	3.30	3.32	
Analyzing quantitative problems	1 st year	2.66	2.58	2.62	
	Seniors	2.85	2.89	2.90	
Using computing and information technology	1 st year	2.99	2.71	2.74	
	Seniors	3.21	2.98	2.98	
Working effectively with others	1 st year	2.92	2.85	2.82	
	Seniors	3.12	3.12	3.11	
Voting in elections	1 st year	1.59	1.65	1.65	
	Seniors	1.93	1.73	1.72	
Learning effectively on your own	1 st year	2.96	2.90	2.95	
	Seniors	3.18	3.09	3.12	
Understanding yourself	1 st year	2.89	2.84	2.87	
	Seniors	2.98	2.99	3.02	
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	1 st year	2.81	2.59	2.57	
	Seniors	2.77	2.68	2.66	
Being honest and truthful	1 st year	2.97	2.78	2.77	
	Seniors	2.94	2.79	2.78	
Contributing to the welfare of your community	1 st year	2.17	2.18	2.21	
	Seniors	2.30	2.41	2.41	

*No effect size at the $p < 0.001$ level for all but the one variable

Opinions About Your School

Emphasis is on philosophy and attitudes students see that the college encompasses and the quality of certain relationships (students, faculty, administrative personnel and offices).

Question: Thinking about your experience at this institution during the current school year, to what extent does your college emphasize each of the following?

Institutional Emphasis*

Variable Values 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much		UTPA Mean	Compara ble Mean	Nat'l Mean
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	1 st year	2.97	3.11	3.14
	Seniors	3.05	3.11	3.13
Providing the support you need to help you succeed	1 st year	2.95	2.96	2.99
	Seniors	2.67	2.82	2.82
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	1 st year	2.59	2.46	2.49
	Seniors	2.24	2.30	2.28
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work family, etc.)	1 st year	2.31	2.09	2.09
	Seniors	1.89	1.87	1.87
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	1 st year	2.47	2.32	2.38
	Seniors	1.95	2.08	2.11

*No Effect Size recorded

Question: Again, thinking about your experience at this institution this year, fill in the oval that best represents the quality of the relationships among people that are typical at this college?

Quality of Relationships*

		UTPA Mean	Comp. Group Mean	Nat'l Mean
Variable Values 1=unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation to 7=friendly, supportive, sense of belonging				
Relationships with other students	1 st year	5.31	5.41	5.48
	Seniors	5.21	5.44	5.44
Variable Values 1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic to 7=helpful, considerate, flexible				
Relationships with faculty members	1 st year	4.86	5.18	5.22
	Seniors	4.98	5.37	5.38
Variable Values 1=unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid to 7=helpful, considerate, flexible				
Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	1 st year	4.71	4.52	4.58
	Seniors	4.03	4.27	4.30

*No Effect Size recorded

Satisfaction*

Variable Values 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=fair, 4=excellent		UTPA Mean	Comparable Mean	Nat'l Mean
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	1 st year	2.97	3.11	3.17
	Seniors	3.02	3.17	3.21
Variable Values 1=definitely no, 2=probably no, 3=probably yes, 4=definitely yes				
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	1 st year	3.16	3.11	3.18
	Seniors	3.01	3.07	3.11

*No Effect Size was recorded

Appendix C

University Retention Advisement Program

Mission and Goals

University Retention Advisement Program Program Design

Mission Statement

The University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) is committed to the development and implementation of programs which are designed to assist students in the expeditious progress through their educational program. This commitment is fulfilled by establishing a comprehensive academic advisement program and services designed

- to create an environment which facilitates students' growth and development and promotes educational persistence and academic achievement;
- to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans that are compatible with their personal abilities and goals;
- to encourage self-reliance and independence as integral elements of their development in fulfilling their academic goals;
- to promote an environment of continuous improvement through regular program evaluation.

Major Goals and Objectives

The major goals and objectives of the academic advising program are intended to enhance the opportunity for UTPA students to complete their postsecondary education by fostering an environment supportive of their success. The challenge is to increase retention and graduation rates of the student population, the majority of whom are first generation, low income college students and, in some cases, academically underprepared for college level coursework.

The major goals are to assist students

- to become familiar with the university environment by establishing direction and purpose in educational and career planning for reaching career objectives;
- to develop a conscious and judicious way to exercise control over personal decisions by having a clear understanding of
 - policies, procedures and programs of the institution and how to access and participate in the academic, cultural and social activities provided by various academic and student services;
 - the institution's course placement policies for enrollment in developmental and college level courses;

- the general education requirements relative to their major/minor by establishing a career objective to guide in selecting coursework toward successful degree completion;
- to conceptualize the relationship between the educational process with reference to academic achievement and preparation for a college degree;
 - to develop academic skills and subject matter knowledge to improve academic performance;
 - to become knowledgeable about the academic process and expectations relative to requirements necessary for continued enrollment;
 - to be able to assess and understand their areas of academic strengths and weaknesses to enable them to capitalize on strengths and work through their difficulties;
 - to become prepared for fulfilling requirements of the law for basic skills development as measured by the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) test;
 - to complete appropriate coursework in a timely manner to continue academic progress toward their degrees.

Performance Measures

Baseline data related to factors which influence retention will be used to determine the performance measures to be established for the institution and the individual academic departments. Timelines should also be considered, as appropriate. Some of the baseline data have been gathered and are provided in Appendix E. According to the data in Chart 1, of the original number of 10,515 undergraduate students (excluding those who graduated during the year) enrolled in Fall 1996, 35.1% did not return in Fall 1997; and, during the year an additional 13.1% changed majors. Therefore, attrition rates of students in most departments are greater than the average for the nonreturning students. For instance, the losses for the year, combining attrition and changes in programs of study, ranged from approximately 20% to 84.8% and 78.6%, respectively, for General Studies and Applied Arts and Sciences majors. It is also important to note that there is a high rate of attrition among students who did not declare a major: 42.2% retention, and only about half of those who returned had subsequently decided on a major course of study. Furthermore, according to records from the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR), during certain periods of the year an average of approximately 100 changes of major forms are processed each day, and there are some students who change majors more than once within the week.