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Lakehead University's Highlights from the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an annual survey of first year and senior year undergraduate students conducted at participating universities across Canada and the United States. Survey responses provide insight into students' backgrounds, current lifestyle, their educational and personal growth outcomes and their satisfaction with the university experience. The survey also helps to assess institutional quality based on student outcomes and based on practices that are known to be positively correlated to successful student outcomes. The educational and personal growth results provide a measure of institutional quality while the five benchmarks of effective educational practices along with the benchmark items highlight areas of best practices and areas for potential improvement within the institution.

Starting in 2006, all publicly funded universities in Ontario agreed to participate in NSSE as part of a consortium. At Lakehead University, 1,500 first year and 1,497 senior year students enrolled in the winter term of 2005-2006 were randomly selected and invited to participate in NSSE. A total of 1,383 students responded for a response rate of 46%, which was higher than the 40% response rate for the Ontario University System. This document provides a summary of Lakehead University's results for the 2006 NSSE.

Portrait of Lakehead University Students

Student characteristics:

- The self-reported characteristics of undergraduate students attending Lakehead University are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Self-reported characteristics of first year and senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University

	First Year	Senior Year
Age (≤ 19)	50%	0%
20-23	30%	57%
24+	20%	43%
First generation (mother with no university experience)	70%	65%
First generation (father with no university experience)	66%	64%
Attended prior post secondary institution	44%	53%
International student	2%	6%
Visible minority	8%	8%
Aboriginal	8%	5%

- Compared to the Ontario University System¹, Lakehead University has older students, more first generation students, more students who have attended another post secondary institution, fewer international students, fewer visible minorities, and more Aboriginal students.

¹ Ontario University System calculations represent the average of students at all Ontario universities except Lakehead.

Time usage:

- The median Lakehead University student, both first year and senior year, spends:
 - 6-10 hours / week on campus outside of class
 - 11-15 hours / week preparing for class
 - 0 hours / week participating in co-curricular activities (e.g. organizations, student government, intramural sports)

Housing:

- First year undergraduate students at Lakehead University live in residence, with parents, or independently, in approximately equal proportions. The majority of senior year undergraduate students attending Lakehead University live independently, a quarter live with parents and less than a tenth live on campus.

Commuting:

- The most popular method of commuting to campus for undergraduate students at Lakehead University is by private automobile.
 - 40% of first year students travel to campus via private automobile, 16% walk, bike or blade, and 9% use public transit. 29% of first year students do not commute; they live in residence.
 - 49% of senior year students travel to campus by private automobile, 30% walk, bike or blade, and 8% use public transit. 7% of senior year students live in residence.
- 76% of first year and 78% of senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University spend less than 20 minutes traveling to campus via their most frequently used mode of transportation.

Finances:

- Personal savings are the most frequently used source of financing some or all of an undergraduate education at Lakehead University.
- Government loans are the most frequently used means of obtaining large sums (> \$5,000) of money to finance an undergraduate education at Lakehead University.
- Financial pressures or work obligations are the biggest obstacle to academic progress at Lakehead University for 34% of first year and 31% of senior year undergraduate students.

Student Satisfaction

Undergraduate students at Lakehead University are satisfied with their university experience and most would select Lakehead again if they were to start their undergraduate career over. Specifically:

- 81% of first year and 72% of senior year students at Lakehead University rate their entire educational experience as excellent or good.
- 80% of first year and 72% of senior year students at Lakehead University would definitely or probably select the same institution if they were to start over again.

However, the responses of senior year students at Lakehead University to both of these questions are significantly different in a negative direction compared to the responses of senior year students in the Ontario University System.

Educational and Personal Growth

The top three self-reported educational and personal growth outcomes for undergraduate students at Lakehead University are: thinking critically and analytically, acquiring a broad general education and learning effectively on your own.

- 84% of both first year and senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University feel that their experience at Lakehead has helped them ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ to think critically and analytically.
- 77% of both first year and senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University feel that their experience at Lakehead has helped them ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ to acquire a broad general education.
- 74% of first year and 76% of senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University feel that their experience at Lakehead has helped them ‘very much’ or ‘quite a bit’ to learn effectively on their own.

Lakehead University undergraduate students’ self-reported educational and personal growth outcomes are similar to those of their Ontario counterparts on almost all items. Lakehead University students’ self-reported educational and personal growth outcomes are higher than those of their Ontario counterparts for the following:

- First year undergraduate students at Lakehead University report that their university experience helped them to work effectively with others and to acquire job or work-related knowledge and skills more frequently than their Ontario counterparts.

Lakehead University students’ self-reported educational and personal growth outcomes are lower than those of their Ontario counterparts for the following:

- First year undergraduate students at Lakehead University report developing a deepened sense of spirituality less frequently than their Ontario counterparts.
- Senior year Lakehead University students report developing an understanding of people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds less frequently than their Ontario counterparts.

Educational and personal growth outcomes vary by Faculty (Table 2 and Table 3). Mean educational and personal growth scores of undergraduate students pursuing their primary major in each of the seven Faculties at Lakehead University are presented in Table 2 and Table 3. Comparisons are with the remaining students in the first year or senior year class. Scores that are significantly different in a positive direction are highlighted green, while those that are significantly different in a negative direction are highlighted light red. For the remainder of the items there is no significant difference.

Table 2: The mean responses to selected educational and personal growth questions of first year students at Lakehead University and within its seven undergraduate Faculties

First Year Students <i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</i> <i>1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>	Lakehead	Business	Education (concurrent)	Engineering	Forestry	Professional Schools	Science & Environmental Studies	Social Sciences & Humanities
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	2.76	2.78	2.74	3.03	3.44	3.00	2.53	2.48
Writing clearly and effectively	2.79	2.90	2.95	2.77	2.69	2.78	2.50	2.78
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.53	2.75	2.57	2.40	2.50	2.60	2.18	2.57
Thinking critically and analytically	3.18	3.31	3.08	3.30	2.94	3.21	3.13	3.25
Analyzing quantitative problems	2.79	3.17	2.60	3.43	2.63	2.71	3.07	2.58
Acquiring a broad general education	3.04	3.20	3.01	2.80	3.38	3.01	2.93	3.10
Using computing and information technology	2.74	3.39	2.47	3.24	3.19	2.69	2.67	2.61
Working effectively with others	2.87	3.37	2.77	2.87	3.00	3.16	2.63	2.49
Solving complex real-world problems	2.49	2.71	2.40	2.67	2.50	2.48	2.43	2.44

Table 3: The mean responses to selected educational and personal growth questions of senior year students at Lakehead University and within its seven undergraduate Faculties

Senior Year Students <i>To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</i> <i>1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>	Lakehead	Business	Education (concurrent)	Engineering	Forestry	Professional Schools	Science & Environmental Studies	Social Sciences & Humanities
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	2.78	3.37	3.08	2.81	3.22	3.13	2.45	2.31
Writing clearly and effectively	2.86	3.37	3.02	2.31	3.04	2.95	2.78	3.00
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.72	3.40	2.82	2.37	2.87	2.89	2.56	2.74
Thinking critically and analytically	3.27	3.47	3.24	3.30	3.17	3.34	3.16	3.26
Analyzing quantitative problems	2.89	3.27	2.63	3.54	3.09	2.69	2.99	2.64
Acquiring a broad general education	3.08	3.23	3.08	2.92	3.00	3.03	3.13	3.18
Using computing and information technology	2.94	3.57	2.70	3.29	3.43	2.94	3.06	2.66
Working effectively with others	2.96	3.47	3.19	3.01	3.04	3.34	2.63	2.57
Solving complex real-world problems	2.57	2.83	2.56	2.90	2.91	2.54	2.38	2.37

- The educational and personal growth outcome scores of Business Administration, Forestry, and Professional Schools students are either not significantly different from or better than the average first year or senior year score.
- The educational and personal growth outcome scores of Science and Environmental Studies and Social Science and Humanities students are either not significantly different from, or lower than, the average first year or senior year student on most items.

Benchmarks

Lakehead University compares favourably to its Ontario counterparts on the five 'benchmarks of effective educational practice' (Table 4). The benchmark scores of undergraduate students at Lakehead University are either not significantly different from, or are higher than, the scores of students across the rest of the Ontario University system.

- First year undergraduate students at Lakehead University scored higher on the Active and Collaborative Learning and the Student-Faculty Interaction benchmarks than first year undergraduate students in the rest of the Ontario University System (green – Table 4).
- Senior year undergraduate students at Lakehead University scored higher on the Active and Collaborative Learning benchmark than senior year undergraduate students across the Ontario University System (green – Table 4).
- Lower scores in comparison to Carnegie peer students (red) indicate the potential for improvement.

Table 4: Benchmark scores for Lakehead University, the Ontario University System and for Carnegie Peer Universities

Benchmark	Lakehead First Year	Ontario First Year	Carnegie Peers First Year	Lakehead Senior Year	Ontario Senior Year	Carnegie Peers Senior Year
Academic Challenge (LAC)	50.9	50.5	50.4	55.9	55.1	54.7
Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL)	38.5	34.4	41.2	45.2	42.7	52.4
Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)	24.2	22.0	33.2	30.7	31.2	44.1
Enriching Educational Experiences (EEE)	24.0	24.4	25.2	31.6	33.7	39.8
Supportive Campus Environment (SCE)	56.2	55.3	60.6	50.8	50.5	59.6

Each benchmark is composed of items representing activities or practices correlated to positive student outcomes and superior institutional quality. Several items representing good practices at Lakehead University are found within the high benchmark scores.

- Areas of excellence in Active and Collaborative Learning at Lakehead University include:
 - First year undergraduate students
 - 43% 'often' or 'very often' ask questions in class / contribute to class discussions
 - 36% 'often' or 'very often' work with other students on projects during class
 - 24% 'often' or 'very often' make a class presentation
 - Senior year undergraduate students
 - 68% 'often' or 'very often' work with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments
 - 33% 'often' or 'very often' work with other students on projects during class
 - 15% 'often' or 'very often' participate in community-based projects as part of a course
- Areas of excellence in Student-Faculty Interaction at Lakehead University include:
 - First year students
 - 37% 'often' or 'very often' discussed grades or assignments with instructor
 - 16% 'often' or 'very often' talked about career plans with faculty or advisor

Despite there being no significant difference between Lakehead University students and Ontario students on any of the remaining benchmarks, there were other items of excellence.

First year students

- Have high quality relationships with faculty members
- 47% have written five or more short papers (<5 pages) in the current school year
- 34% have participated in community service or volunteer work
- 13% have participated in a practicum, internship, co-op, or clinical assignment

Senior year students

- Have high quality relationships with other students
- 63% have written five or more medium papers (5-19 pages) in the current school year
- 20% have written five or more long papers (>19 pages) in the current school year
- 22% have participated in a learning community

Benchmark scores vary by Faculty. Mean benchmark scores of students pursuing their primary major in each of the seven undergraduate Faculties at Lakehead University are presented in Table 5. Comparisons are with the students of other Faculties in the first year or senior year class. Scores that are significantly different in a positive direction are highlighted green, while those that are significantly different in a negative direction are highlighted light red. For the remainder of the items there is no significant difference.

Table 5: The mean benchmark scores of first year and senior year students at Lakehead University and within its seven undergraduate Faculties

First Year –Unweighted	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Enriching Educational Experiences	Supportive Campus Environment
Lakehead (Total)	50.8	38.7	23.8	24.1	56.3
Business	55.8	44.2	25.1	24.8	55.4
Education (concurrent)	48.0	38.4	20.6	21.6	57.5
Engineering	58.7	38.7	23.1	23.4	57.9
Forestry	45.1	43.1	27.5	20.2	56.8
Professional Schools	50.0	43.4	24.7	28.2	58.7
Science & Environmental Studies	50.2	34.0	22.1	21.9	53.0
Social Sciences & Humanities	51.1	32.9	25.9	23.8	54.3
Senior Year -Unweighted	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Enriching Educational Experiences	Supportive Campus Environment
Lakehead (Total)	56.1	45.8	30.8	31.7	50.9
Business	62.1	58.0	36.6	33.5	56.4
Education (concurrent)	57.9	52.4	29.5	35.7	49.8
Engineering	59.9	40.4	26.2	26.0	49.4
Forestry	59.9	54.2	42.3	37.4	54.1
Professional Schools	56.3	58.3	34.2	38.3	51.8
Science & Environmental Studies	53.4	38.0	31.3	29.7	50.9
Social Sciences & Humanities	51.9	36.6	30.0	28.3	50.6

The response patterns for the educational and personal growth items by Faculty parallel the response patterns for benchmarks by Faculty.

- Business Administration, Forestry and Professional Schools had benchmark scores that were either not significantly different from or better than the average first year or senior year score.

The scores of Science and Environmental Studies and Social Science and Humanities students on each of the five benchmarks are either not significantly different from, or lower than, the average first year or senior year student.