

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2001-2009: Trends, Highlights, and NSSE Accountability Performance Indicators

Introductory facts:

- The NSSE is a survey that assesses student engagement in educational practices that are associated with high levels of learning and development. NSSE developed five benchmarks of effective educational practice that are computed based on the results of clusters of individual survey questions: **Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Interaction with Faculty Members, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment.**
- Evergreen **first year and senior students** have participated in the NSSE annually since spring 2000. **Beginning with NSSE 2010 Evergreen will transition to a 2-year cycle and participate on even-numbered years,** thus synchronizing with the COPLAC consortium schedule and permitting more time to analyze and share results.
- Evergreen joined the **Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC) during NSSE 2009.** The CSWC was created to more deeply explore the teaching and practice of writing through 27 additional survey items about writing practices. Over 70 institutions joined the CSWC; however, only 27 colleges with more similar Carnegie classifications to Evergreen's were selected for comparison on the supplemental writing questions. Due to limitations on the number of peer groups NSSE allows, CSWC replaced our typical Carnegie class comparison group (Masters-Small) for one-year only.
- **425 Evergreen students completed the NSSE 2009,** compared to 440 in 2008. **The response rate of the random sample was 31%,** equal to the national NSSE participation rate and a bit higher than Evergreen's response rate of 28% in 2008. Evergreen participated through NSSE's "web+" administration mode for the fourth time. The first three contacts were via email (evergreen.edu email accounts) then non-respondents received a final outreach by mail at their home addresses.
- **Evergreen's 2009 survey responses represented 25% of all first year students and 22% of all seniors enrolled.** This level of representativeness is consistent with the previous two administrations, resulting in a 3-year average of 25% of all enrolled first years and 22% of enrolled seniors participating in the NSSE annually.
- 616 U.S. colleges and universities participated in NSSE 2009. The **comparison groups** presented in the following benchmark charts include "**COPLAC**" (the 8 participating Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges), "**Lib Arts**" (our historical Carnegie classification peers, not available after NSSE 2005), "**Masters-Small**" (our current Carnegie classification, with data from 2006-2008), and "**All NSSE**" (all 616 participating U.S. institutions).

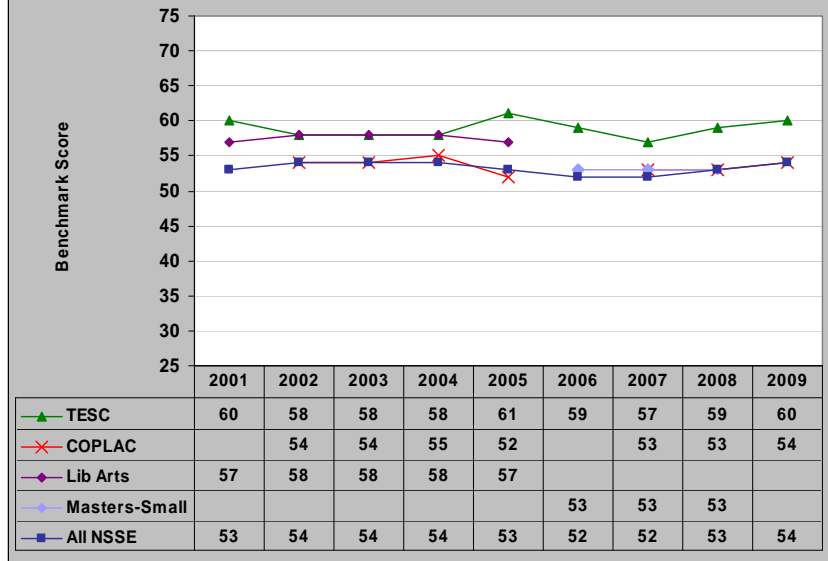
Level of Academic Challenge

High-performing (Evergreen first years as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other first year students, Evergreen first years:

- Spend more time preparing for class, synthesizing, analyzing, and making judgments about the value of information
- Read more assigned texts
- Write more short papers (<5 pages)
- Perceive lower campus emphasis on spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work

First-Year: Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark 2001-2009

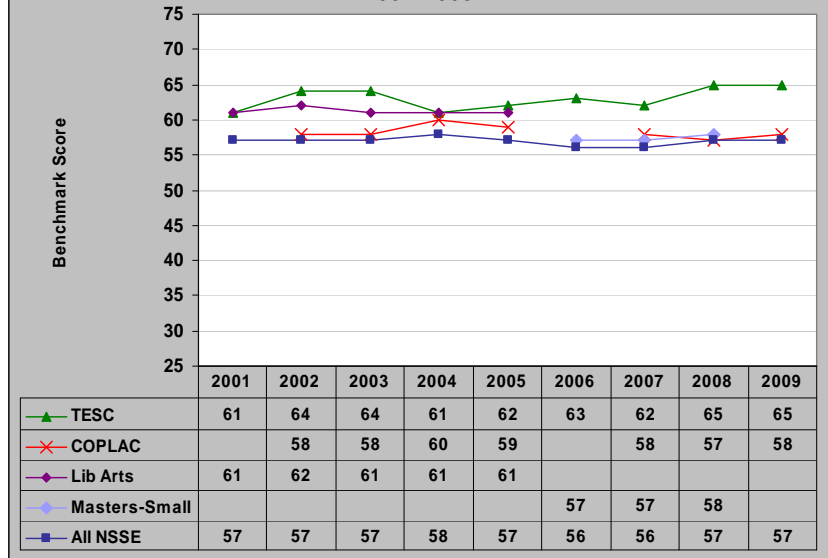


High-performing (Evergreen seniors as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

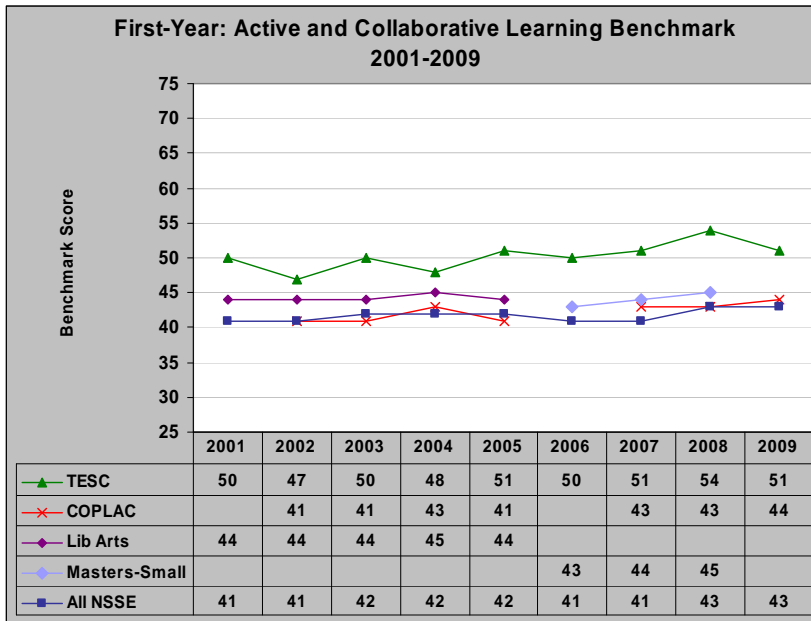
Compared to other seniors, Evergreen seniors:

- Spend more time preparing for class, synthesizing, analyzing, making judgments about the value of information, and applying theories to problems
- Read more assigned texts
- Write more short papers (<5 pages)
- More frequently work harder than they thought they could to meet expectations
- There are no items for which Evergreen seniors are lower than one of our comparison groups.

Seniors: Level of Academic Challenge Benchmark 2001-2009



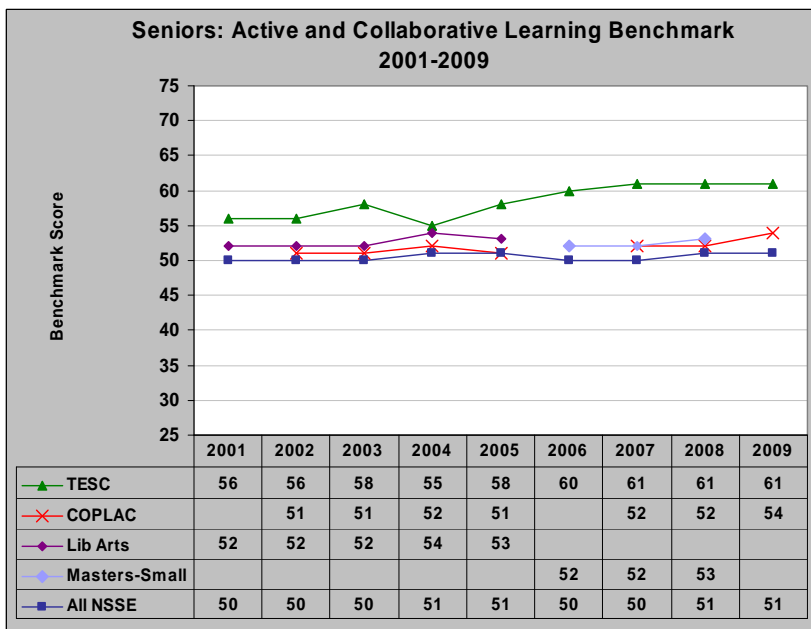
Active and Collaborative Learning



High-performing (Evergreen first years as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other first year students, Evergreen first years:

- Are more likely to ask questions and contribute to discussions in class and give class presentations
- More often work with other students on projects during class and outside of class
- More often discuss ideas from reading and classes with others outside of class
- More frequently participate in a community-based project
- Are less likely to have tutored or taught other students



High-performing (Evergreen seniors as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other seniors, Evergreen seniors:

- More frequently ask questions and contribute to class discussions in class and give class presentations
- More often work with other students on projects during class and outside of class
- More often discuss ideas from class with others outside of class
- More frequently participate in a community-based project
- There are no items for which Evergreen seniors are lower than one of our comparison groups.
- In 2009, Evergreen seniors were significantly higher than at least one comparison group on 6 out of 7 measures of active and collaborative learning; the only exception was their average level of tutoring other students.

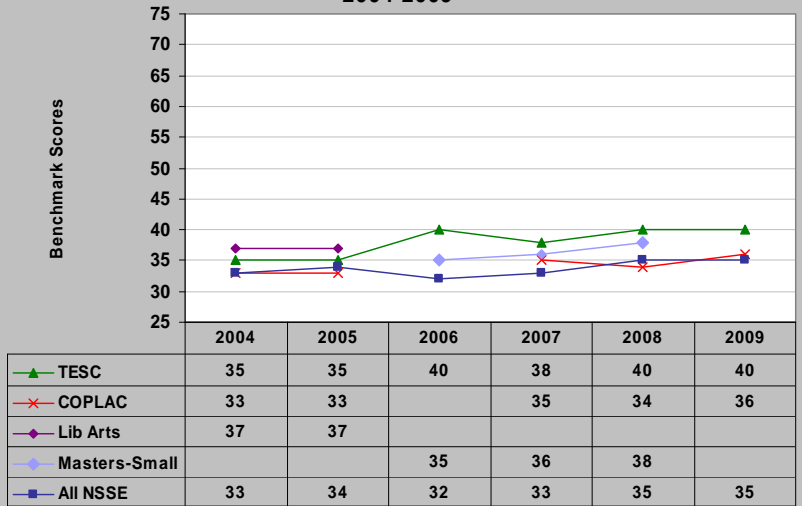
Student-Faculty Interaction

High-performing (Evergreen first years as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other first year students, Evergreen first years:

- More often discuss ideas from class with faculty members outside of class
- More frequently receive prompt feedback on academic performance
- More often discuss grades or assignments with faculty
- Are less likely to talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor.
- Are less likely to work with faculty on activities other than coursework

First-Year: Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark
2004-2009*



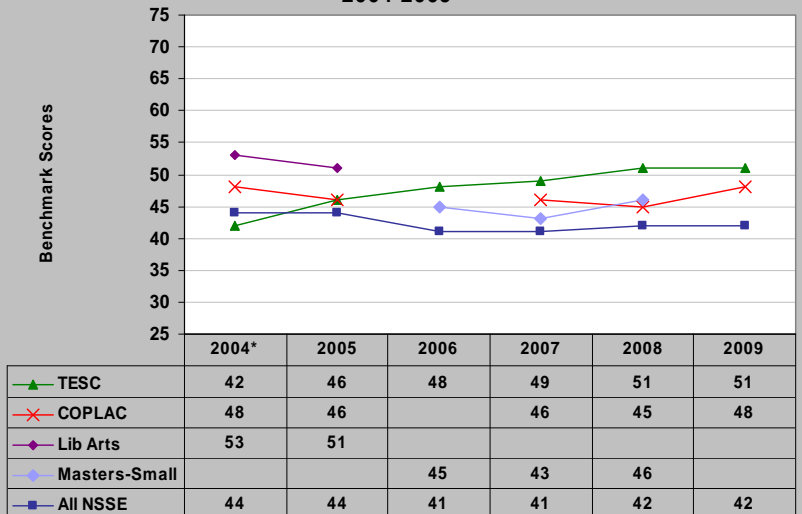
*NSSE reconfigured one of the questions in this benchmark in 2004, thus the benchmark cannot be compared to earlier performance.

High-performing (Evergreen seniors as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other seniors, Evergreen seniors:

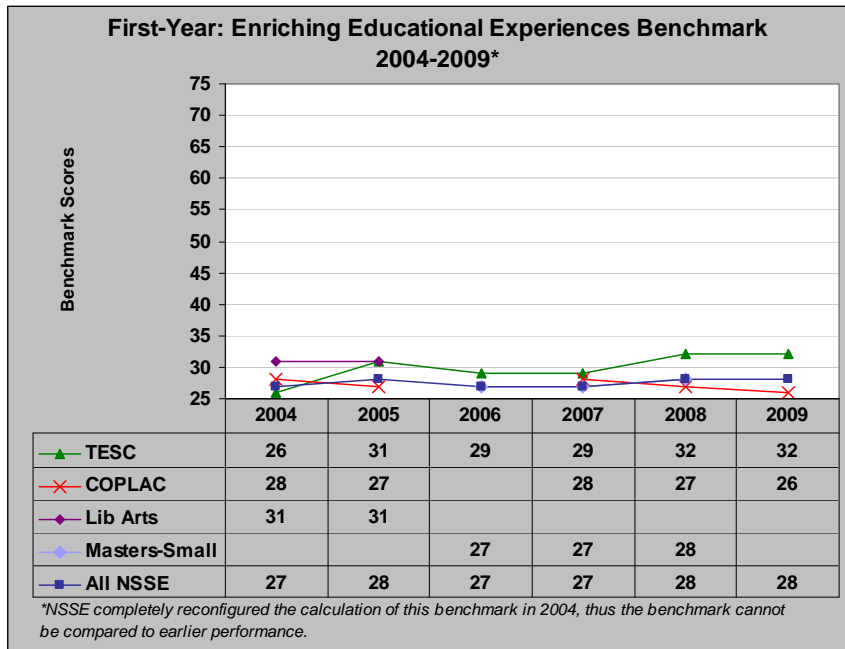
- More often discuss ideas from class with faculty members outside of class
- More frequently receive prompt feedback on academic performance
- More often discuss grades or assignments with faculty
- More often talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor.
- There are no items for which Evergreen seniors are lower than one of our comparison groups.

Seniors: Student-Faculty Interaction Benchmark
2004-2009*



*NSSE reconfigured one of the questions in this benchmark in 2004, thus the benchmark cannot be compared to earlier performance.

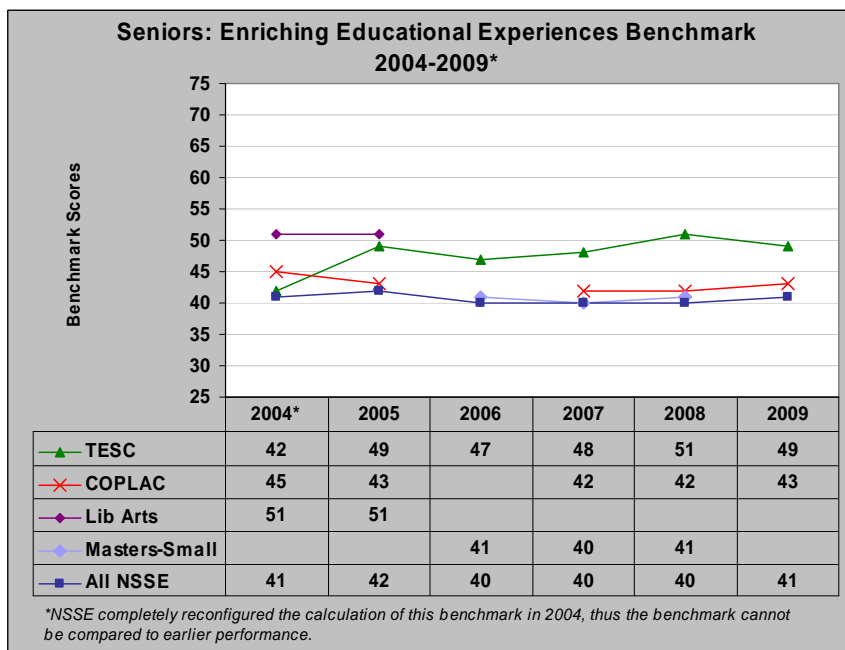
Enriching Educational Experiences



High-performing (Evergreen first years as engaged as top 10% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other first-year students, Evergreen first-years:

- Perceive a stronger campus emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds
- Are more likely to have participated in a learning community and independent study/self-designed major
- More frequently have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity and with students who are very different in terms of religious beliefs, political or personal values
- Are more likely to have done a practicum or internship
- Spend less time on co-curricular activities
- Are less likely to have participated in foreign language studies
- Are less likely to have participated in a culminating senior experience



Above Average (Evergreen seniors as engaged as top 50% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other seniors, Evergreen seniors:

- Perceive a stronger campus emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds
- Are more likely to have participated in a learning community, independent study, and study abroad
- More frequently have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity and with students who are very different in terms of religious beliefs, political or personal values
- Spend less time on co-curricular activities
- Are less likely to have participated in a culminating senior experience.

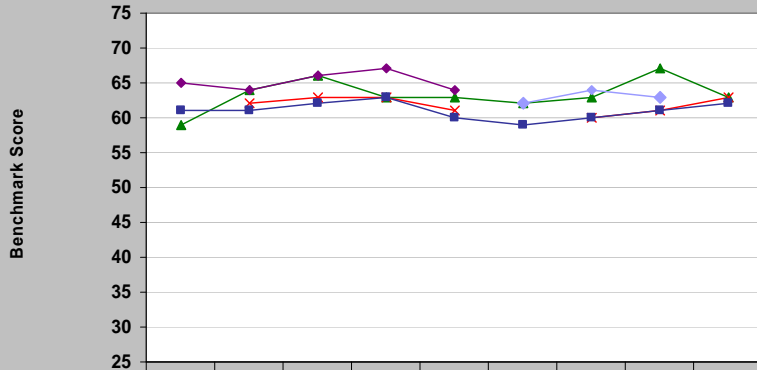
Supportive Campus Environment

Evergreen first years significantly less engaged than top 50% of NSSE schools

Compared to other first-year students, Evergreen first-years:

- Report a higher quality of relationships with faculty members
- Are more likely to feel their campus environment provides the support they need to succeed academically
- Are less likely to feel their campus environment helps them cope with their non-academic responsibilities or provides the support they need to thrive socially

First-year: Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark 2001-2009

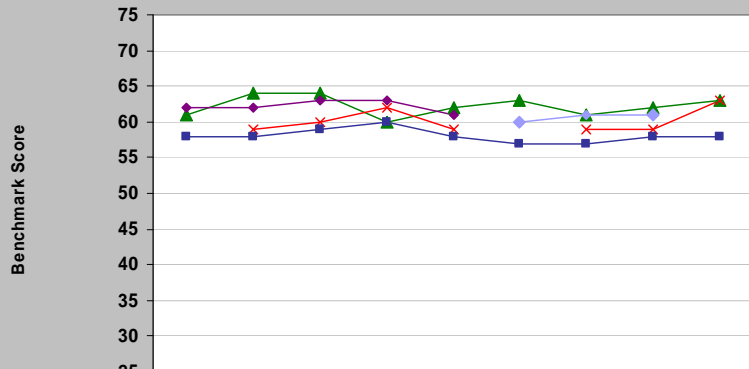


Above Average (Evergreen seniors as engaged as top 50% of NSSE schools)

Compared to other seniors, Evergreen seniors:

- Report a higher quality of relationships with faculty members and administrative personnel and offices
- Are more likely to feel their campus environment provides the support they need to succeed academically
- Report a lower quality of relationships with other students

Seniors: Supportive Campus Environment Benchmark 2001-2009



Consortium for the Study of Writing in College: Supplemental Questions for the National Survey of Student Engagement

Evergreen joined the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC) during NSSE 2009. The Consortium and its survey of writing practices are products of a partnership between the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) and NSSE and were designed as a tool for colleges and universities to assess writing in their curricula and to inform strategic planning. Seventy-five institutions joined the CSWC, twenty-seven of which were selected as Evergreen's comparison group based on their similar Carnegie classifications. Two-thirds of the comparison colleges are privately controlled and one-third of them are public.

The CSWC survey consisted of 27 questions administered as a supplement to the NSSE and consisted of four distinct question sets. **Process** questions pertained to tasks or tools used in the development of a piece of writing, such as brainstorming, seeking feedback on a draft, and proofreading. **Genre and Strategy** questions dealt with types and styles of writing, such as narration, position, and use of visual content. **Teaching Best Practices** questions addressed methods of instruction and level of explanation given. The section on **Higher Order Thinking Activities** consisted of two questions about students' plans to prepare a portfolio of written work or submit work for publication.

Comparing the responses of Evergreen first year and senior students with each other and with their peers in the Consortium provided valuable insight into the college writing experience at Evergreen. Following are some selected highlights from the results:

- With only two exceptions (preparing a portfolio and writing assignments in which students analyze or evaluate material), Evergreen first years scored at or below CSWC peers.
- On the other hand, Evergreen seniors tended to score at or above the level of CSWC seniors. Evergreen seniors were only significantly less likely than CSWC peers to use online tutoring, write in the style of a specific field, and receive explanation from faculty about learning objectives and evaluation criteria for assignments.
- For all eight Process items, the percentage of Evergreen seniors who reported doing a task for *most or all assignments* was greater for first-years. This pattern is the opposite of the comparison colleges, where first year students employ writing process techniques (such as consulting with others about ideas, receiving feedback on drafts, and proofreading) with greater frequency than they do later as seniors.
- Evergreen first year students indicate a lower use of writing process activities than their comparison peers, while Evergreen senior responses reflect more frequent utilization of the process items than CSWC seniors.
- Use of the campus writing center was fairly consistent between first year and senior students, with almost half of each group using the writing center for at least one assignment and about 10% of each group visiting the writing center as a regular practice.
- Evergreen seniors were more likely than first years to write in the style and format of a specific field. Both groups of Evergreen students were significantly less likely than their peers to complete assignments in the style of a specific field, which is likely an artifact of Evergreen's intentional focus on interdisciplinarity.
- Both first years and seniors at Evergreen were more likely to analyze or evaluate something they read, researched, or observed than their CSWC peers.
- Three-quarters of both first year and senior students felt their instructors provided clear instructions for *most or all assignments*. At the same time, less than half of Evergreen first years and only half of seniors reported they received explanation of what the instructor wanted them to learn from an assignment.
- A significantly higher percentage of Evergreen first year students prepared portfolios of written work than CSWC first years. Evergreen seniors were not significantly different from the comparison group in this area.

Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) Accountability Indicators from NSSE

In Spring 2006, the HECB adopted another revision to the state accountability framework. At that time, they decided to allow institutions to select up to three institution-specific indicators related to *quality* instead of restricting institutions to indicators of economic contribution and degree-production. The following NSSE indicators were selected as Evergreen’s institution-specific accountability measures related to educational quality. Selecting indicators from the NSSE allows Evergreen to understand student experience in the context of other similar colleges and national trends.

Evergreen students improved notably on all three indicators this year. On the first indicator, percentage of seniors who **have done/plan to do community service** prior to graduation, Evergreen has historically lagged behind our peers. This year they improved by 5 percentage points and matched the NSSE national average. The second measure, **development in solving complex real-world problems**, jumped 9 percentage points this year, from 74% to 83%. Evergreen seniors have historically outpaced their peers on this measure and widened the gap further this year despite improvement by COPLAC schools. The percentage of first year students who report often or very often having **serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity** increased from 62% to 66%, which was the second year of improvement on a measure that has shown wide fluctuations from year to year in the past.

Evergreen-specific Quality Indicators	Five-year Average Baseline	2005-06 Performance	2006-07 Performance	2007-08 Performance	2008-09 Performance
Percentage of seniors who have done or plan to do community service or volunteer work prior to graduation	TESC = 67% Peers: COPLAC = 71% National = 68%	TESC 06 = 76% Peers: National = 75% Carnegie Masters-Small = 75%	TESC 07 = 72% Peers: COPLAC = 74% National = 75% Carnegie Masters-Small = 76%	TESC 08 = 72% Peers: COPLAC = 76% National = 77% Carnegie Masters-Small = 76%	TESC 09 = 77% Peers: COPLAC = 78% National = 77%
Percentage of seniors reporting that Evergreen contributed “quite a bit” or “very much” to their development in solving complex real-world problems	TESC = 75% Peers: COPLAC = 56% National = 58%	TESC 06 = 78% Peers: National = 60% Carnegie Masters-Small = 60%	TESC 07 = 78% Peers: COPLAC = 59% National = 61% Carnegie Masters-Small = 62%	TESC 08 = 74% Peers: COPLAC = 57% National = 62% Carnegie Masters-Small = 64%	TESC 09 = 83% Peers: COPLAC = 64% National = 64%
Percentage of first year students who report having serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity “often” or “very often.”	TESC = 60% Peers: COPLAC = 48% National = 51%	TESC 06 = 59% Peers: National = 49% Carnegie Masters-Small = 47%	TESC 07 = 53% Peers: COPLAC = 50% National = 50% Carnegie Masters-Small = 48%	TESC 08 = 62% Peers: COPLAC = 50% National = 52% Carnegie Masters-Small = 51%	TESC 09 = 66% Peers: COPLAC = 46% National = 53%

Notes: Source of all institution-specific indicators is the annual administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE scores for the COPLAC comparison group represent the results for participating Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges. The national comparison group includes all participating colleges and universities. Carnegie Masters-Small were the participating colleges who share Evergreen’s 2005 Carnegie basic classification.