

# **BENCHMARKS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE**

*The benchmarks are based on 41 key questions from the NSSE survey that capture many of the most important aspects of the student experience. These student behaviors and institutional features are some of the more powerful contributors to learning and personal development.*

## **LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGE**

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

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, and other activities related to your academic program)
- Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations
- Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings
- Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more
- Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages
- Number of written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages
- Coursework emphasizes: Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- Coursework emphasizes: Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information or experiences
- Coursework emphasizes: Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods
- Coursework emphasizes: Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- Campus environment emphasizes spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work

## **STUDENT INTERACTIONS WITH FACULTY MEMBERS**

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

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

## **ACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

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

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

## **ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Complementary learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom augment the academic program. Experiencing diversity teaches students valuable things about themselves and other cultures. Used appropriately, technology facilitates learning and promotes collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide students with opportunities to synthesize, integrate, and apply their knowledge. Such experiences make learning more meaningful and, ultimately, more useful because what students know becomes a part of who they are. Activities and conditions:

- Talking with students with different religious beliefs, political opinions, or values
- Talking with students of a different race or ethnicity
- An institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Using electronic technology to discuss or complete assignments
- Participating in:
  - Internships or field experiences
  - Community service or volunteer work
  - Foreign language coursework
  - Study abroad
  - Independent study or self-designed major
  - Culminating senior experience
  - Co-curricular activities

## **SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT**

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

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