

The Insight

Research has identified many educational best practices that contribute to students' success. Data from seven years of NSSE surveys of Ferris students provides guidance for improvement opportunities.

Implications

With increased competition among higher education providers, there will be distinct advantages for those universities that create the most effective learning environment. Ferris has extensive evidence that can be used to accentuate our positives and remedy any shortcomings.

“Students who felt safe, comfortable being themselves, valued, and part of the community had more positive interactions with others on campus, perceived greater institutional support, and believed more strongly that their college experience had facilitated their growth and development across a range of outcomes” NSSE 2016.

NSSE Data from 2014/2016 Suggests Opportunities

Since 2005 (a pilot year), Ferris has administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Since 2006, 4302 seniors have responded to this every-other-year survey. Reports are available on the Ferris Academic Affairs assessment web page. Over this period, Ferris results have been highly consistent.

NSSE research relates first-year student experiences with second-year retention and six-year graduation rates. This research confirms the positive correlation between the following engagement indicators with retention and graduation.

When comparing Ferris' aggregated 2014 and 2016 results for seniors to our Great Lakes public university peers, we find the following: Ferris exceeds the mean of Great Lakes peers in these three areas by the differences in parentheses:

- Higher-order learning (+.1)
- Quantitative reasoning (+1.1)*
- Quality of interactions (+.3)

Of these, only Quantitative reasoning is statistically significant. Ferris lags behind its Great Lakes peer public universities in these areas by the differences noted:

- Reflective and integrative learning (-1.1)**
- Learning Strategies (-.3)
- Collaborative Learning (-.6)
- Discussions with Diverse Others (-4.4)***
- Student-Faculty Interaction (-1.3)**
- Effective Teaching Practices (-.7)!
- Supportive Environment (-3.8)***

The asterisks indicate the significance of the differences with the ! representing $p < .10$ while *** represents $p < .001$. Given the information above, coupled with that from 2005 through 2012, Ferris has extensive data that will be useful in accentuating our positives and improving any shortcomings.

Over the next three years, each college will be working on quality improvement initiatives that address learning, retention, and climate, and the NSSE data should provide valuable insights to this work.