



South African Survey of Student Engagement

Quality, Effectiveness and Cohesion: Starting a conversation

Second Colloquium on Improving Undergraduate Success

5 March 2010



Studente Ontwikkeling en Sukses • Student Development and Success

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Overview



- **Part 1: Introduction**
 - What are the drivers of student success?
 - What is Student Engagement?
- **Part 2: Measuring Student Engagement**
 - South African Survey of Student Engagement
 - Benchmarks of effective educational practice
- **Part 3: Results of the SASSE 2009 pilot**
- **Part 4: Implications for South African higher education**



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South African Survey of Student Engagement

PART 1:

Introduction



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Relationship between Student Engagement and success



- **Predictors of student success**
 - Academic preparation
 - Motivation
 - Institutions increase selectivity and focus on recruiting the “best and the brightest”
 - Only a few institutions can do this
 - **Student Engagement**
 - Principle: What students do matters to their persistence and success
 - Amount of time and effort students spend on academic activities and other activities that enhance their success
 - Allocation of resources and organisation of learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate

(Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 & Kuh et al., 2005)



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Relationship between Student Engagement and success

Put more simply...



- Student Engagement is:
 - What students **do** – time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
 - What institutions **do** – using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
 - Educationally effective institutions channel student energy towards **activities that matter.**

(Kuh, 2007)



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PART 2:

Measuring Student Engagement



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SASSE Questionnaire



Student Behaviours



Institutional Actions &
Requirements



Reactions to
Higher Education



Student Background
Information



**Student
Learning &
Development**

Effective Educational Practices



- **Level of Academic Challenge**
- **Active and Collaborative Learning**
- **Student-Staff Interaction**
- **Enriching Educational Experiences**
- **Supportive Campus Environment**

Using self-reported data



Self-report data is more accurate when:

- Information is known to respondents
- Questions refer to recent activities
- Questions are worded unambiguously
- Items are not threatening and/or embarrassing
- High construct and content validity

SASSE is designed on these principles



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Purposes of SASSE data



- Frequency of engagement in educationally effective practices
- Identify problem areas – things that institutions can do something about
- Paint a picture of students at an institution
- Refocus conversation on quality of education
- Inform decision making
- Mobilise actions towards success



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PART 3:

Results SASSE 2009 Pilot



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Sample 2009



- 13 636 respondents.
- Seven institutions across South Africa
 - 5681 (42%) from universities, 4441 (33%) from comprehensive universities and 3459 (26%) from universities of technology.
- Gender
 - 41% were male and 59% female.
- Race
 - 65% Black African, 7% Coloured, 2% Indian/Asian and 22% White



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Looking Within



- **Between-institution** variation is how much student scores vary between institutions
- **Within-institution** variation is how much student scores vary within institutions
- Important to bear in mind that within-institution variation far exceeds between-institution variation



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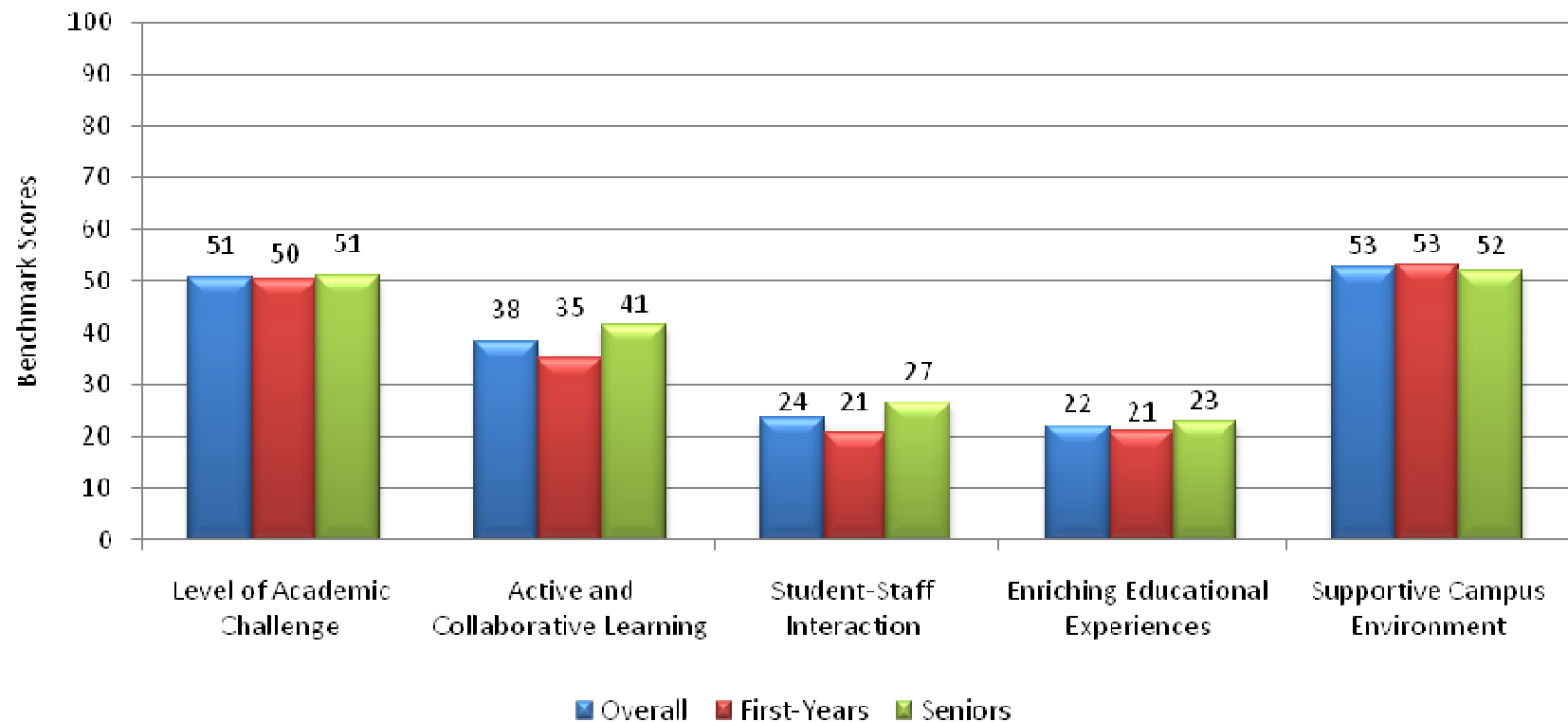
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Overall Benchmark Performance



Benchmark Performance SASSE 2009 Pilot



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Level of Academic Challenge



- Black African and Indian/Asian students report significantly higher levels of academic challenge than White and Coloured students
- 54% had often worked harder than they thought they could to meet a lecturer's standards
 - However, within various racial groups:
 - 59% of Black African students, 49% of Coloured students, 45% of White students and 40% of Indian/Asian



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Time Usage



- Students spend on average
 - 10 hours per week studying
 - 16 hours per week attending scheduled academic activities
 - 11 hours per week socialising
- First-years report spending significantly more time participating in scheduled academic activities than seniors.
- Female students report spending significantly more time studying than males, who in turn spend more significantly more time socialising.
- Black African students spend more time preparing for class and socialise less than other groups, but attend fewer scheduled academic activities



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Active and Collaborative Learning



- Students participate in more collaborative learning activities than active learning activities
 - Coloured students participate in more collaborative learning activities than any other group
 - White students report more active learning activities than Indian/Asian and Black African students



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Student-Staff Interaction



- Students interact more frequently with staff for class related matters than for activities outside of the classroom.
- Seniors interact more frequently with staff than first-years
- White students interact significantly more often with staff than Black African and Indian/Asian students do
- Males interact more frequently with staff than females
- Approximately a third of students report often receiving prompt feedback on their academic performance
- Half of the students have never talked to anyone about their career plans



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Enriching Educational Experiences



- Female students use IT for academic purposes more frequently than males
- White students report significantly less use of IT for academic purposes than all other race groups



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Interactions with Diversity



- First-year students report significantly more interactions with diverse peers than seniors.
- White students interacted the least with diverse peers.
- Females interacted more frequently with diverse peers than males
- Less than 50% of the students indicated that their institution placed adequate emphasis on encouraging contact between students of different backgrounds.
- Only 42% often have serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity.



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Supportive Campus Environment

- First-years reported more support for success from their campus than seniors, but also reported that their relationships with others (students and staff) on campus were less positive
- Students report that their relationships with administrative staff are less positive than their relationships with academic staff
 - Only 54% reported academic staff to be helpful, available and sympathetic, and 38% of the sample rated administrative staff as helpful, considerate and flexible
- Black students reported the highest levels of support for success and found the campus overall to be more supportive



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Student Satisfaction



- Almost three-quarters of the sample would choose to study at their institution again if they were to start their studies over.
 - Significantly more first-years would return to their institutions (76%) than seniors (68%)
- 79% of first-years and just over three-quarters of seniors evaluated their overall experience at their institution as positive



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PART 4:

Implications for the sector



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Implications for the sector



- Design of a four-year undergraduate degree
- Improving higher education outcomes
- Enhancing quality assurance of T & L
- Furthering social cohesion



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Implications for the sector



- **Design of a four-year undergraduate degree**
 - Room for improvement in student engagement levels
 - Current preparedness level of Grade 12's require additional support and development
 - Facilitating greater social cohesion requires more time and different delivery methods
 - A four year curriculum could therefore not just help to improve chances of success but also deliver a new generation of citizens.



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Implications for the sector



- **Improving higher education outcomes**
 - A decade of student engagement research provides wealth of ideas on how to become intentional about getting students to do the “right things”.
 - Furthering a culture of evidence around success is essential
 - A new emphasis on the importance of institutional research



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Implications for the sector



- **Enhancing quality assurance of T & L**
 - Student Engagement data can be used to initiate conversations about improving:
 - The student experience
 - Teaching and learning
- **Further social cohesion**
 - Student Engagement provides data on the experience of different groups and with literature provides suggestions on possible solutions



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Coming soon...



- Details on how to participate in 2010 after lunch
- CHE publication on student engagement and success
- **The next generation**
 - Developing new researchers one of the deliverables of the project

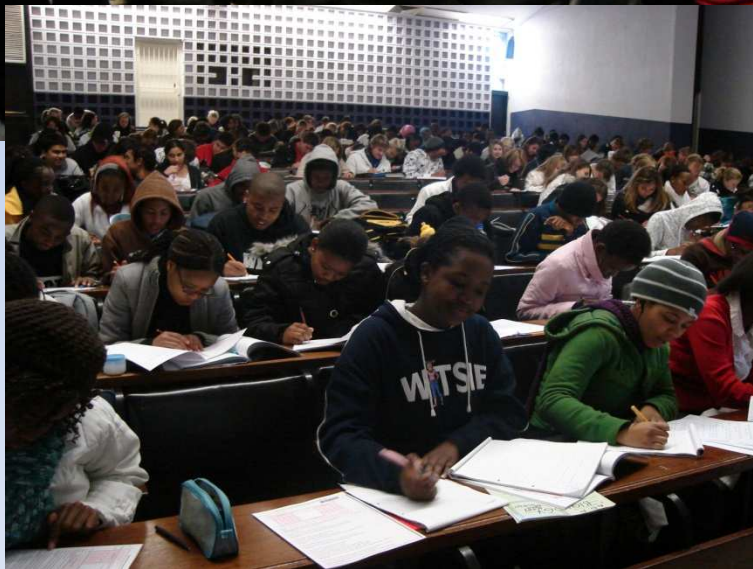


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The next generation



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Thank you



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