

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Freshman Seminar
First Year Initiative Survey Report
Class of 2012

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE

The University of Scranton
2008 Freshman Seminar
First Year Initiative Survey Report

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Freshman Seminar First Year Initiative Survey Report 2008

Executive Summary

The First Year Initiative (FYI) survey includes 70 questions related to the student's experience in a first year program. Using factor analysis, these 70 questions were grouped into 15 specific generalized Factors. In analyzing the survey, one Factor, the student's perception of "*Overall Course Effectiveness*," was chosen to be the dependent variable. The other 14 Factors were analyzed and ranked as predictors on the degree to which each of those other Factors contributed to the perception of overall effectiveness.

Students answered the survey questions using a 7 point scale, with 1 meaning "not at all" and 7 meaning "significantly." There was also an option of "not applicable." For all of these Factors, a mean goal score of 5.5 or greater is considered excellent or superior; 4.5 to 5.49 is considered good; 3.5 to 4.49 is fair; and below 3.5 is poor.

The University of Scranton ranked higher in twelve of the Factors than the "Carnegie Classification" comparison group. The Factors that the University ranked lower in were "*Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies*" (Factor 7), "*Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness*" (Factor 10), and "*Course Included Engaging Pedagogy*" (Factor 14).

The University of Scranton ranked higher in fourteen of the Factors than the "All Institutions" comparison group. The Factor that the University's mean score was lower in was "*Course Included Engaging Pedagogy*" (Factor 14).

The FYI indicated priority Factors or Predictors that should produce the greatest impact on course effectiveness and student satisfaction in the Freshman Seminar at The University of Scranton. The Factors or predictors were: "*Course Improved Study Strategies*" (Factor 1, 3rd Predictor), "*Course Improved Connections with Peers*" (Factor 5, 4th Predictor), "*Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement*" (Factor 6, 5th Predictor), "*Usefulness of Course Readings*" (Factor 12, 2nd Predictor), and "*Course Included Engaging Pedagogy*" (Factor 14, 1st Predictor). Performance on these Factors is below the 5.5 mean goal value and improvement of these Factors should impact overall course effectiveness. Increased efforts (e.g. personnel, fiscal, time, focus) in these areas should increase overall satisfaction with and effectiveness of the Freshman Seminar course.

The data from the FYI and the recommendations from Educational Benchmarking, Inc. suggest future investigations of the Freshman Seminar course at The University of Scranton might include the following topics: research on the impact of assignments; various teaching methods; course readings; available civic engagement opportunities; various and differentiated study strategies; exploration of various peer interactions; and college differences regarding these areas.

Although "*Sense of Belonging and Acceptance*" (Factor 11) and "*Satisfaction with College/University*" (Factor 13) they have little impact on overall course effectiveness, the University of Scranton rated excellent in this area.

Introduction

The fall 2008 Freshman Seminar students were asked to complete the First Year Initiative (FYI) survey. The First Year Initiative (FYI) benchmarking survey, developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College and Educational Benchmarking, Inc. (EBI), assesses the learning outcomes of and satisfaction with first-year seminars. The survey measures fifteen Factors. The ranks of the Factors for the University of Scranton and the other participating institutions within its Carnegie classification were compared. This report presents the results of the overall effectiveness of the Freshman Seminar course, Factors with the greatest impact on course effectiveness, and areas to maintain and monitor.

The administration included a web-based survey and a reporting process that allowed institutions to benchmark outcomes against a self-selected comparison group of peer institutions. Unfortunately, this year there were no appropriate comparison institutions who participated in the survey. However, to provide context to The University of Scranton's results, the Carnegie classification group to which the University of Scranton belongs, was analyzed. There were fourteen schools that participated from the Carnegie Class - Master's Colleges and Universities (small to medium programs). Also, the University of Scranton's results were compared to all 64 participating institutions.

The fifteen Factors represented in the FYI include:

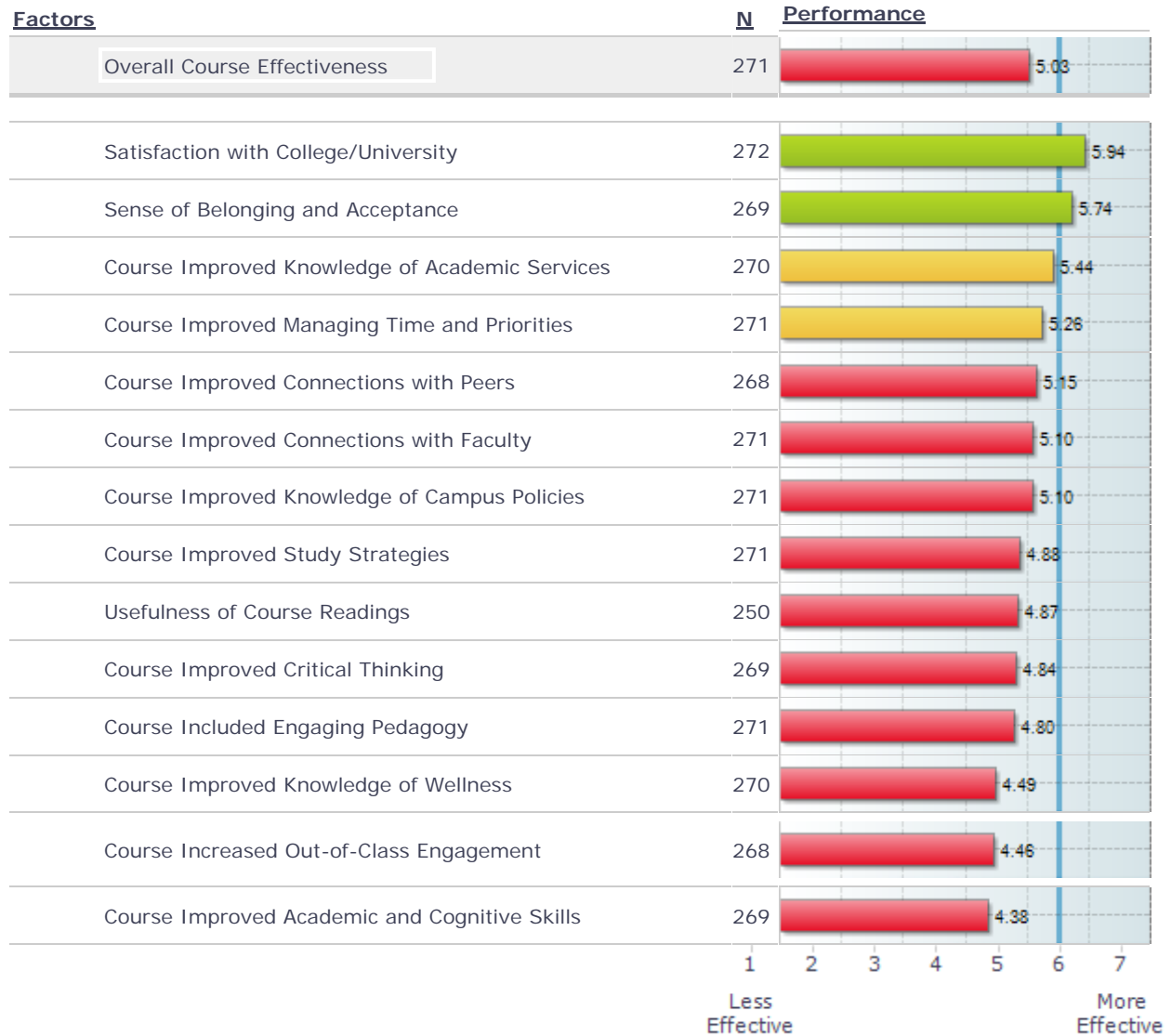
- Factor 1: *Course Improved Study Strategies,*
- Factor 2: *Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills,*
- Factor 3: *Course Improved Critical Thinking,*
- Factor 4: *Course Improved Connections with Faculty,*
- Factor 5: *Course Improved Connections with Peers,*
- Factor 6: *Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement,*
- Factor 7: *Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies,*
- Factor 8: *Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services,*
- Factor 9: *Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities,*
- Factor 10: *Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness,*
- Factor 11: *Sense of Belonging and Acceptance,*
- Factor 12: *Usefulness of Course Readings,*
- Factor 13: *Satisfaction with College/University,*
- Factor 14: *Course Included Engaging Pedagogy,*
- Factor 15: *Overall Course Effectiveness*

Respondent Demographics:

Out of the 272 (27.9% of the freshmen) students who participated in the FYI survey, 68.8% were female and 31.3% were male. Of the 272 respondents, 268 answered the ethnicity question; 88.1% of the students were White, 2.2% were Hispanic, .8% were Multiracial, .8% were African American, 3% were Asian, 1.1% were Non U.S. Citizen/Resident, and 4.1% responded Other. Finally, 83.5% were living in the campus residence halls, 14.7% were living off-campus with family, 1.1% were living off-campus not with family, and .4% had other housing.

How the does University of Scranton perform across all aspects of the experience?

Table 1:
Aspects with which the University of Scranton freshmen were most and least satisfied.



- = The University of Scranton has a higher mean than the goal (5.5).
- = The University of Scranton is within .25 of the goal (5.5).
- = The University of Scranton has a lower mean than the goal (5.5) by more than .25.

Table 2:
Aspects with which the University of Scranton freshmen were most and least satisfied compared to Carnegie Class and All Institutions.

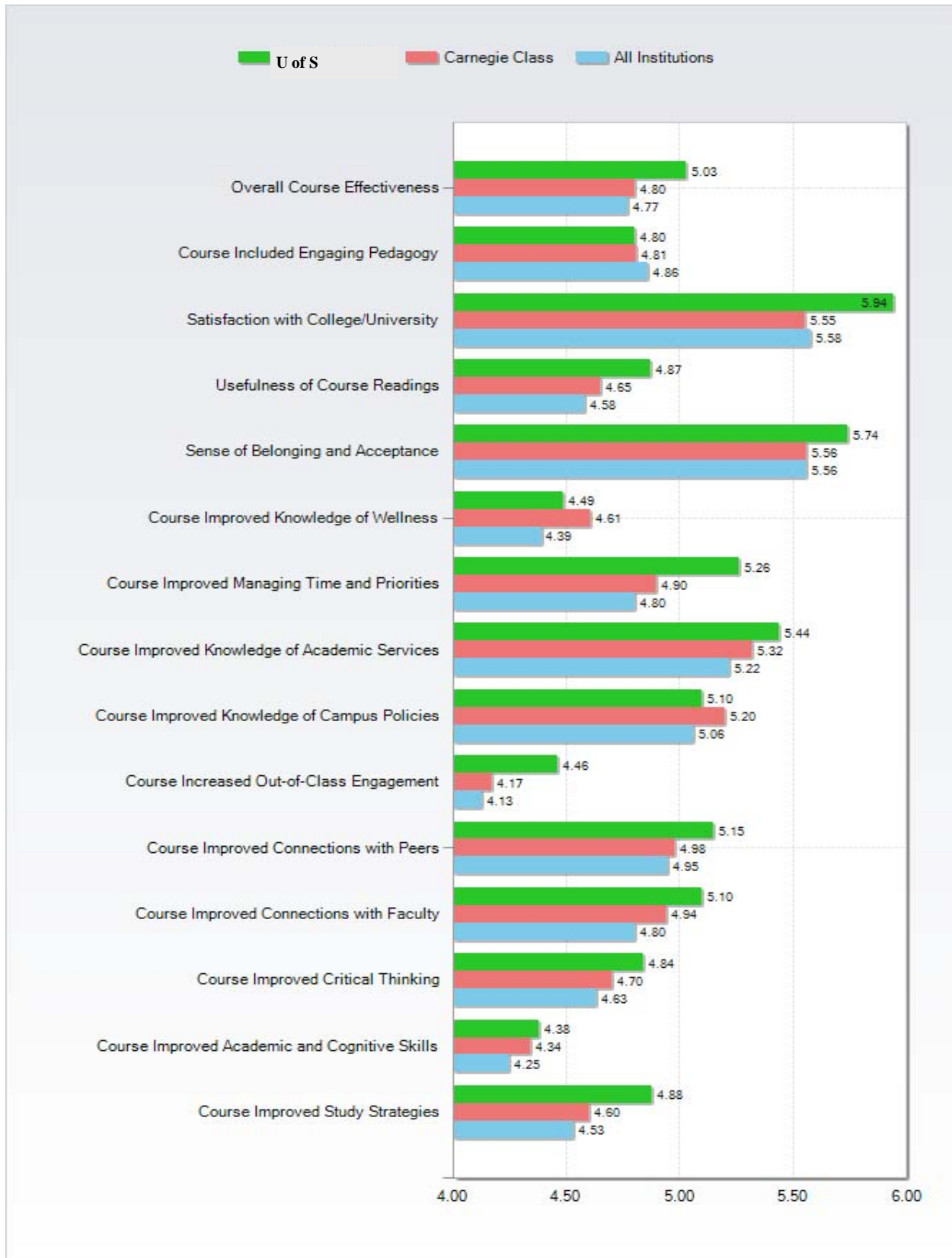


Table 1 represents our mean scores for each of the fifteen benchmarks and Table 2 shows our mean scores alongside the comparison groups. Both tables begin with the lead benchmark or dependent variable of *“Overall Course Effectiveness.”* Table 1 sorts the Factors by mean score in descending order.

For *“Overall Course Effectiveness”* (Factor 15), the University’s mean score of 5.03 fell below the goal mean score of 5.5 on the seven point scale, but it was significantly higher than the mean scores of the comparison groups. (Refer to Table 2 for the *“Carnegie Classification”* mean score of 4.8 and the *“All Institutions”* mean score of 4.77).

The two Factors where the University of Scranton freshmen reported the highest mean levels were *“Satisfaction with College/University”* (Factor 13) and *“Sense of Belonging and Acceptance”* (Factor 11). The University of Scranton’s mean score for *“Satisfaction with College/University”* (Factor 13) is 5.94 which is above the goal mean and is significantly higher than the comparison groups. The *“Carnegie Classification”* group’s mean score is 5.55 and the *“All Institutions”* group’s mean score is 5.58. The University of Scranton’s mean score for *“Sense of Belonging and Acceptance”* (Factor 11) is also above the goal mean score and significantly higher than the comparison groups. The *“Carnegie Classification”* group’s mean score is 5.56 and the *“All Institutions”* group’s mean score is 5.56.

The University of Scranton’s lowest mean score of 4.38 for *“Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills”* (Factor 2) fell below the goal mean, but was higher than the mean scores of the comparison groups. The *“Carnegie Classification”* group’s resulting mean is 4.34 and the *“All Institutions”* group’s mean is 4.25.

The *“Carnegie Classification”* group has a higher mean score for the Factors *“Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies”* (Factor 7), *“Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness”* (Factor 10), and *“Course Included Engaging Pedagogy”* (Factor 14). The *“All Institutions”* comparison group has a higher mean score for *“Course Included Engaging Pedagogy”* (Factor 14). The University of Scranton’s mean score is not statistically lower on these three Factors but still falls below the mean goal level of 5.5.

Areas where the University of Scranton has improved.

Table 3:
Factors where satisfaction has improved. These results are based on a comparison to the respondents from the 2005 FYI survey.

<u>Factors</u>	<u>N</u>	Difference in Satisfaction: 2008 vs. 2005
Overall Course Effectiveness	401	.50
Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement - 5th Predictor	412	1.02
Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness	415	1.02
Course Improved Critical Thinking	410	.99
Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills	416	.95
Course Improved Connection with Peers - 4th Predictor	416	.77
Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities	415	.73
Course Improved Study Strategies - 3rd Predictor	416	.66
Course Included Engaging Pedagogy - 1st Predictor	415	.61
Usefulness of Course Readings - 2nd Predictor	335	.61
Course Improved Connections with Faculty	415	.57
Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies	415	.50
Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services	415	.19
Satisfaction with College/University	415	.13
Sense of Belonging and Acceptance	414	.07

[-] Less Satisfied No Change [+] More Satisfied

Table 3 depicts the difference in the University of Scranton’s mean scores from 2005 and 2008 again using the dependent variable of “Overall Course Effectiveness.” Factors follow in descending order of greatest increase since 2005.

The freshmen from 2008 reported increases in satisfaction as compared to the freshmen from 2005 with the course for nearly all of Factors.

The Predictor Factors represent the areas where improvement should result in increased *“Overall Course Effectiveness”*. All five Predictor Factors show increased satisfaction with the Freshman Seminar course.

The Five Predictor Factors are:

- *Course Included Engaging Pedagogy - 1st Predictor*
- *Usefulness of Course Readings - 2nd Predictor*
- *Course Improved Study Strategies - 3rd Predictor*
- *Course Improved Connection to Peers - 4th Predictor*
- *Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement - 5th Predictor*













Where should the University of Scranton focus its attention?

The Factors in Table 4 represent areas where the University of Scranton needs improvement and where corrective action needs considering. The five Predictor Factors supporting the dependent variable or lead Factor of *“Overall Course Effectiveness”* mean scores are all below the mean goal level of 5.5 and are listed as top priorities. These five Predictor Factors, if improved, should lead to increased course effectiveness and overall satisfaction with the Freshman Seminar course. The other seven Factors are listed as “low impact” and should be monitored. Focusing time, energy, and resources on these Factors will have little impact on the “Overall Course Effectiveness.”

There are two crucial elements for identifying where to invest the University’s time, energy and resources to improve overall course satisfaction and effectiveness.

1. Level of Satisfaction: The lower the level of satisfaction the greater the opportunity to make improvements.
2. Impact on Overall Satisfaction: The level of impact of a Factor on overall satisfaction is the degree to which the Factor, if improved, will improve overall satisfaction. High impact Factors, if improved, will do the most to improve Overall Satisfaction.

**Table 4:
Factors where the University of Scranton needs improvement.**

Overall Course Effectiveness Factors	Impact on Overall Course Effectiveness	Contribution to the Total Impact	Factor Performance	Recommendation Category
High Impact Factors				
Course Included Engaging Pedagogy	1 st Predictor	22.6%	Below Goal  (4.80)	Top Priority
Usefulness of Course Readings	2 nd Predictor	18.3%	Below Goal  (4.87)	Top Priority
Course Improved Study Strategies	3 rd Predictor	12.8%	Below Goal  (4.88)	Top Priority
Course Improved Connections with Peers	4 th Predictor	10.2%	Below Goal  (5.15)	Top Priority
Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement	5 th Predictor	9.4%	Below Goal  (4.46)	Top Priority
Low Impact Factors				
Course Improved Academic and Cognitive Skills	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (4.38)	Monitor
Course Improved Critical Thinking	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (4.84)	Monitor
Course Improved Connections with Faculty	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (5.10)	Monitor
Course Improved Knowledge of Campus Policies	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (5.10)	Monitor
Course Improved Knowledge of Academic Services	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (5.44)	Monitor
Course Improved Managing Time and Priorities	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (5.26)	Monitor
Course Improved Knowledge of Wellness	Non Predictor	0.0%	Below Goal  (4.49)	Monitor

Conclusion:

Overall the University of Scranton has improved the satisfaction with and the effectiveness of the Freshman Seminar course since 2005. However, twelve of the Factors still fall below the 5.5 mean goal indicating further investigation into course improvement.

The greatest gains toward improving overall satisfaction and course effectiveness are made by focusing on the Factors that have high impact and low satisfaction. Improving an area with low satisfaction but little impact will do little to improve overall course satisfaction. These Factors are listed above in Table 4 and are:

- *Course Included Engaging Pedagogy - 1st Predictor*
- *Usefulness of Course Readings - 2nd Predictor*
- *Course Improved Study Strategies - 3rd Predictor*
- *Course Improved Connection to Peers - 4th Predictor*
- *Course Increased Out-of-Class Engagement - 5th Predictor*

Future investigations of the Freshman Seminar course at the University of Scranton might include research on the impact of various teaching methods, course readings, available academic services, and various study strategies.

Copies of the web-based survey instrument and the data are available. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact the Institutional Research Office.

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