

## NSSE Benchmark Report

In 2003, Calvin participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a survey that annually “assesses the extent to which undergraduate students are involved in educational practices empirically linked to high levels of learning and development.” Nationally, 649 institutions and 185,000 students participated. At Calvin, 444 first-year students and 290 seniors were surveyed.

From the responses to students on many items, NSSE created five clusters of questions and created from these five benchmark scores for the institution. These were named:

1. Level of academic challenge
2. Active and collaborative learning
3. Student-faculty interactions
4. Enriching educational experiences
5. Supportive campus environment

Calvin received a score on each of these five benchmarks for each of the two classes (first-year and senior). This score can be compared to the benchmark scores of the 91 other Baccalaureate-General schools and the 649 total schools in the sample. The most important conclusions are these:

- Calvin first-year students and seniors rated “the level of academic challenge” significantly **higher** than did students at other institutions
- Calvin first year students and seniors rated “enriching educational experiences” significantly **higher** than did students at other institutions
- Calvin first-year students and, especially, seniors rated “supportive campus environment” significantly **higher** than did students at other institutions
- Calvin first-year students (but not seniors) rated “student-faculty” interaction significantly **lower** than did students at other institutions
- Calvin first year students and seniors did not differ significantly from those at other institutions on the benchmark of “active and collaborative learning”

The surprising (and negative) result of these is the fact that Calvin first-year students score lower on the benchmark of “student-faculty interaction” than do students at other schools. The individual questions that comprised this benchmark are the following

How often did you

- Discuss grades or assignments with an instructor
- Talk about career plans with a faculty member or an advisor
- Discuss ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Work with faculty members on activities other than coursework
- Receive prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance
- Work or plan to work with a faculty member on a research project outside of course or program requirements