

Analysis of Results of the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Introduction

In spring 2017 first-year and senior students in a baccalaureate degree program at Farmingdale State College participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The survey, administered by the Indiana Center for Postsecondary Research, collects information regarding students' attitudes, behaviors and engagement in educational practices that are linked with positive learning outcomes, personal development, student satisfaction, persistence, and higher graduation rates. This analysis is based on response distributions organized by four main themes; academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment.

Methodology

Farmingdale's 3,081 qualifying baccalaureate students (646 first-year and 2,435 seniors) were invited to participate in NSSE. 730 students responded (138 FY and 592 SR), representing an overall significant response rate of 24% (21% FY and 24% SR). The distribution of students was fairly close to the actual distribution in terms of ethnicity, major and full-time status. Females comprised a larger portion of respondents. Students from 530 institutions across the country participated in NSSE, and Farmingdale's responses were benchmarked to SUNY Colleges of Technology, institutions in our Carnegie classification, and SUNY state-supported campuses. Farmingdale's results were also examined in comparison to our 2014 administration of NSSE.

Executive Summary

First-year students and seniors are generally happy with their overall experience at Farmingdale. Great strides have been made in regard to the quality and accessibility of academic advising, particularly with first-year students. Students feel that Farmingdale as an institution has a strong commitment to diversity, but that it is not emphasized as much in their coursework. Our students think very highly of our faculty, but for many, interaction with faculty occurs only during class time. Farmingdale's students do not collaborate with other students as much as students at our peer institutions largely due to the fact that many are commuters and have work and family obligations. Seniors, in particular, feel that Farmingdale does not place much emphasis on helping them with their non-academic obligations. Another result of their obligations is that our students do not participate in campus organizations and activities as much as students at our peer institutions, although first-year students have become more involved in recent years. Our participation in high impact practices is considerable given that two of our largest majors do not have an applied learning requirement. Our students' participation rates in high-impact practices are below that of our peers, but our standing should improve as applied learning becomes a graduation requirement for all baccalaureate programs and students utilize the newly formed Nexus Center.

Summary of Key Findings

- The vast majority of Farmingdale first-year and senior students (82%) have had a good or excellent educational experience at Farmingdale. Among first-year students this represents a significant improvement compared to the 2014 survey administration. These gains coincide with significant gains in our first-year students' ratings of the quality of their interactions with faculty, staff and academic advisors.

- First-year students are much more satisfied with academic advising than they were in 2014 as evidenced by higher ratings in terms of accessibility, receptiveness to interests and concerns, information provided, and help with academic difficulties.
- Improvements in the advisement of students that have been implemented at Farmingdale in recent years with the establishment of the AAIC, the initiation of the RAM program for first-year students along with other initiatives, is evident in significant gains in ratings related to academic advising among first-year students.
- Although the most frequently cited primary source of advising for our seniors is ‘assigned academic advisor’, a significantly higher percentage of seniors (13%) are utilizing online advising as their primary source of academic advising. At the same time, academic advisor ratings related to discussions on interests and performance, help with academic difficulties, and information on special opportunities declined in general.
- The majority of our first-year and senior students feel that Farmingdale provides a supportive environment for various diverse groups quite a bit or very much. A lesser, yet substantial, percentage of seniors felt that Farmingdale provides very little support for diverse groups, particularly diverse political affiliations (19%).
- In general, Farmingdale first-year students and seniors perceive that diversity is emphasized more by the institution than it is in their coursework.
 - Our first-year students and seniors feel there is a commitment to diversity from Farmingdale as an institution that ensures students are not stigmatized, and takes allegations of harassment seriously. First-year students have more of a sense of institutional commitment to diversity, particularly in creating a sense of community among students.
 - About one-half of our first-year students and seniors indicated that their course work emphasizes the skills to relate to diversity or discusses issues related to diversity, but a significant portion of first-year students and seniors indicate that diversity has very little emphasis in their coursework, and approximately one-fifth of both first-year students and seniors have not included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments during the academic year.
- Farmingdale seniors are engaging in quantitative reasoning at levels significantly below peer institutions and average engagement scores have declined from the last survey administration, driven largely by a significant percentage of seniors (22%) who have not used numerical information to examine real-world issues or evaluated others’ conclusions based on numerical information during the year.
- Student comments in NSSE confirm that Farmingdale students think highly of our faculty, but for many students, interaction with faculty occurs mainly during class time. More than one-half of our first-year students and seniors never worked with a faculty member on a committee or student group, and over one-third never discussed course topics with a faculty member outside of class during the school year.
- Farmingdale’s first-year and senior students generally collaborated with other students less often than their peers at other institutions, which may be a result of the larger commuter population at Farmingdale. Approximately one-quarter of our first-year and one-fifth of our seniors have not prepared for an exam by discussing or working through course material with other students during the year. However, when the collaboration was assigned, such as working with other students on course projects, ratings were higher, particularly for seniors (56% do so at least often).
- Our seniors are spending less time preparing for class than seniors at the benchmark institutions, which may be due to our students’ work and family obligations. Additionally, 41% of FSC seniors stated that the institution places very little emphasis on helping students manage their non-academic responsibilities.
- Furthermore, almost one-half (48%) of our first-year students and 64% of our seniors do not participate in campus organizations, publications, government, fraternities, sororities, or play sports in a typical week, but participation in these campus activities has increased among first-year students since the last survey administration (+ 7 ppt. to 52% participating at least an hour a week). While 70% of our first-year students feel that Farmingdale places a lot of emphasis on providing opportunities for students to be involved socially, fewer feel that there is much emphasis on attending campus activities (57%) and attending events that address important issues (43%).

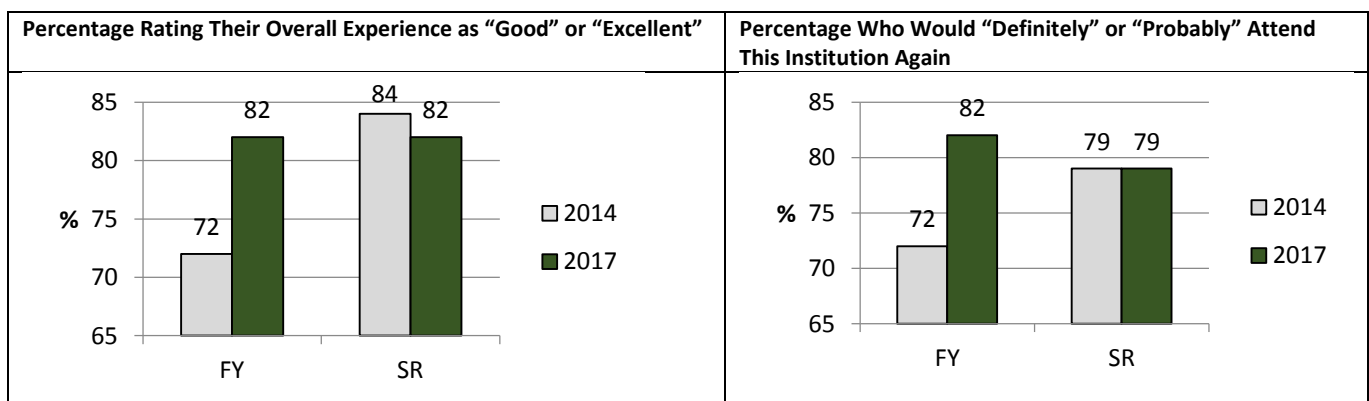
- Farmingdale students' participation in high-impact practices, such as learning communities, service-learning, research with faculty, study abroad, internships, and senior projects, is significantly below that of students at SUNY Techs, at schools in our Carnegie classification, and at SUNY State-Ops. 70% of our seniors indicated they have participated in at least one high-impact practice and 40% of first-year students indicated the same. The highest participation rates among our seniors were service learning and internships or field experience. The lowest participation rates among our seniors were in study abroad, research with faculty and learning community. However, our comparative standing is expected to improve in future survey administrations as applied learning becomes a graduation requirement and students utilize the services of the newly formed Nexus Center.

Key Findings

Overall Experience

The vast majority of Farmingdale students, both first-year (FY) and senior (SR), responded in a positive way to questions regarding their perceptions of the general quality of the institution. 82% of our first-year students and seniors evaluated their overall experience at Farmingdale as being good or excellent. Farmingdale FY students in 2017 are much more satisfied with their experience at Farmingdale than the 2014 cohort of our FY students.

When asked if they could start over, would they attend Farmingdale again, 82% of FY students and 79% of seniors stated they would definitely or probably attend this institution again. FY students in 2017 are much more likely to attend Farmingdale if they could start over than the FY students in 2014, a reflection of the increase in their satisfaction with their overall experience.



The majority of seniors perceived that their experience at FSC contributed very much or quite a bit to their knowledge, skills and personal development in all ten categories listed below. The area in which the most FSC seniors stated that FSC helped them at least quite a bit was critical thinking (80%), followed by writing clearly and effectively (72%). The items with the least positive ratings were "being an informed and active citizen" and "understanding people of other backgrounds".

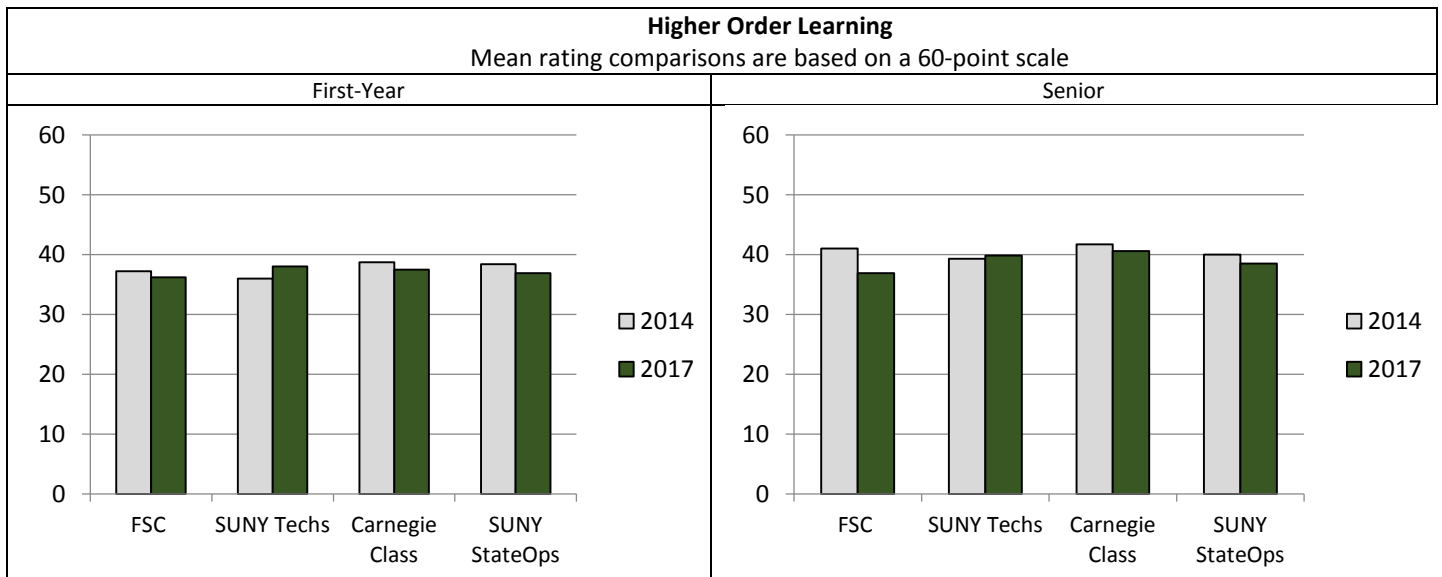
Perceived Gains (Sorted highest to lowest)	Percentage of Seniors Responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit"	Percentage of Seniors Responding "Some" or "Very Little"
Thinking critically and analytically	80%	20%
Writing clearly and effectively	72%	28%
Working effectively with others	67%	33%
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge & skills	67%	33%
Speaking clearly and effectively	66%	34%
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	63%	37%
Solving complex real-world problems	59%	41%
Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics	58%	42%
Understanding people of other backgrounds (econ., racial/ethnic, polit., relig., nation., etc.)	57%	44%
Being an informed and active citizen	52%	48%

Academic Challenge

Scores for this theme are broken down into four categories: higher-order learning, reflective & integrative learning, learning strategies, and quantitative reasoning.

Higher-Order Learning. The mean-rating score for higher-order learning is based on four questions about the degree in which coursework emphasizes:

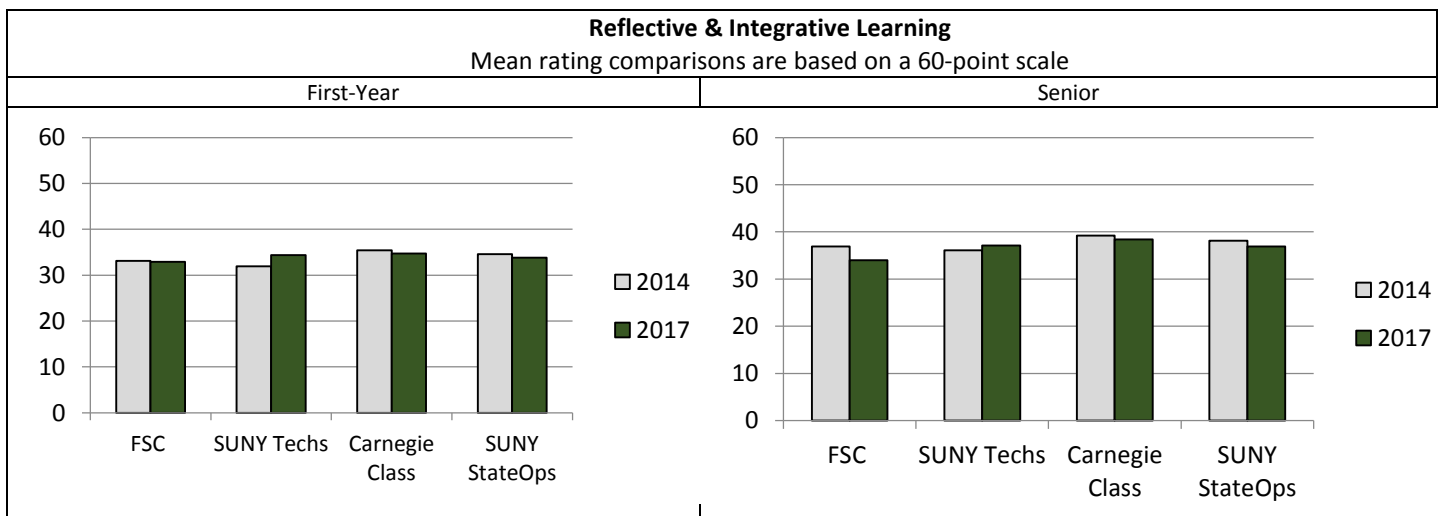
- Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations
- Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts
- Evaluating a point of view, decision or information source
- Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information



Although most Farmingdale seniors indicated that their coursework emphasizes the four items in higher-order learning quite a bit or very much, comparison ratings were significantly below seniors at other SUNY Colleges of Technology, institutions in our Carnegie classification, and SUNY state-ops, and were lower than reported for the cohort of seniors in the prior survey administration.

Reflective & Integrative Learning. The mean-rating score for reflective & integrative learning is based on seven questions about the frequency in which students:

- Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments
- Connected learning to societal problems or issues
- Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
- Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge

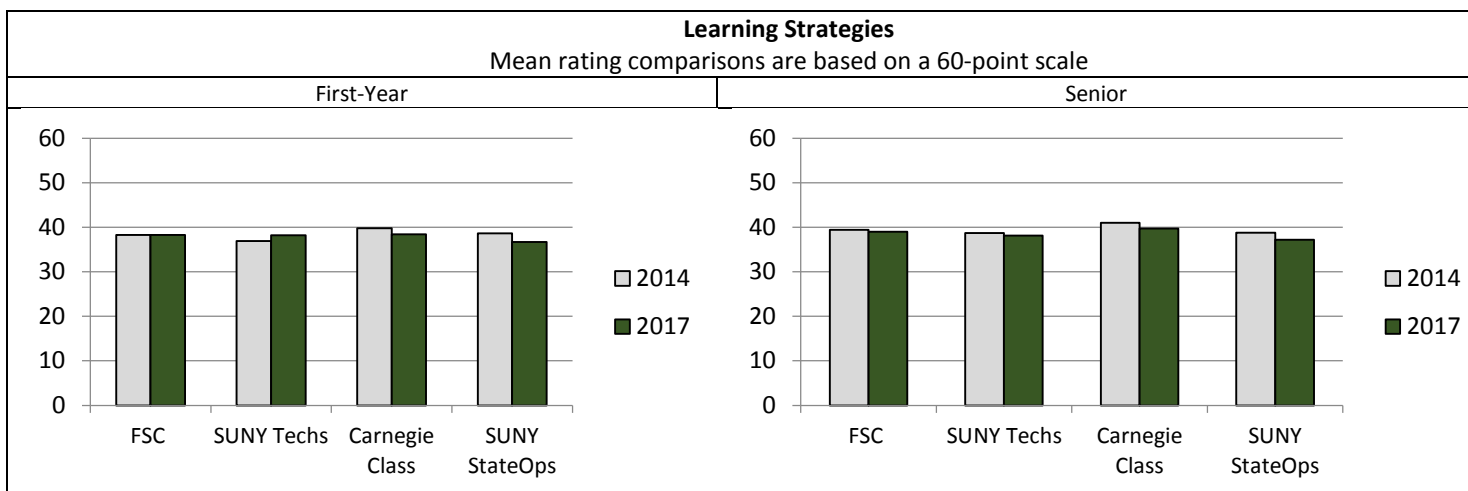


Farmingdale Freshmen and seniors are connecting ideas from their courses to their prior experiences and knowledge more often than they are doing other types of reflective and integrative learning. The type of reflective learning done the least often is ‘included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments’, performed often by only 38% of seniors and 36% of first-year students.

Seniors at our comparison institutions are engaging in each type of reflective and integrative learning more frequently than Farmingdale seniors. Our freshmen are on par with their peers at the comparison institutions, except for ‘diverse perspectives’ which was significantly lower.

Learning Strategies. The mean-rating score for learning strategies is based on three questions about the frequency in which students:

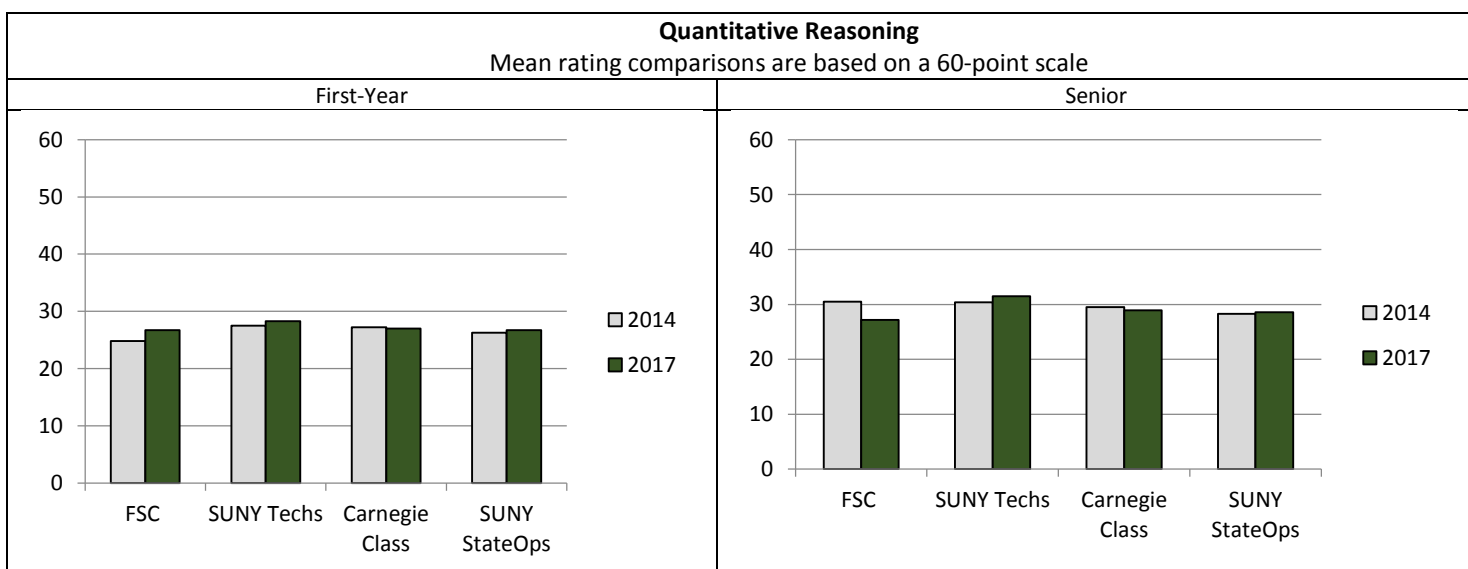
- Identified key information from reading assignments
- Reviewed notes after class
- Summarized what you learned in the class or from course material



Most of our students, both FY and SR, are utilizing effective learning strategies at generally the same rate as the students at the comparison institutions.

Quantitative Reasoning. The mean-rating score for quantitative reasoning is based on three questions about the frequency in which students:

- Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs, statistics, etc.)
- Used numerical information to examine a real-world problem or issue (unemployment, climate change, public health, etc.)
- Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information



The 2017 comparison score for first-year students in this category is similar to the peer institutions, but has improved since the 2014 survey administration.

The 2017 comparison score for seniors in this category is significantly below SUNY Techs, our Carnegie class, and SUNYs, and is lower than the prior administration of the survey. Almost one-quarter (22%) of Farmingdale seniors indicated that in the past year, they have not used numerical information to examine real-world issues or evaluated others conclusions based on numerical information during the year.

Other Questions related to Academic Challenge

Other questions related to academic challenge reveal that our senior students spend less time preparing for class than their peers (average total 13.2 hours per week vs. 15.3 for SUNY Techs), and turn in shorter writing assignments (average total 63.9 pages per year vs. 78.5 for SUNY Techs).

Approximately one-half of our FY and SR students feel that their courses challenge them very much to do their best work. Responses were higher among FY students than their peers at the SUNY Techs.

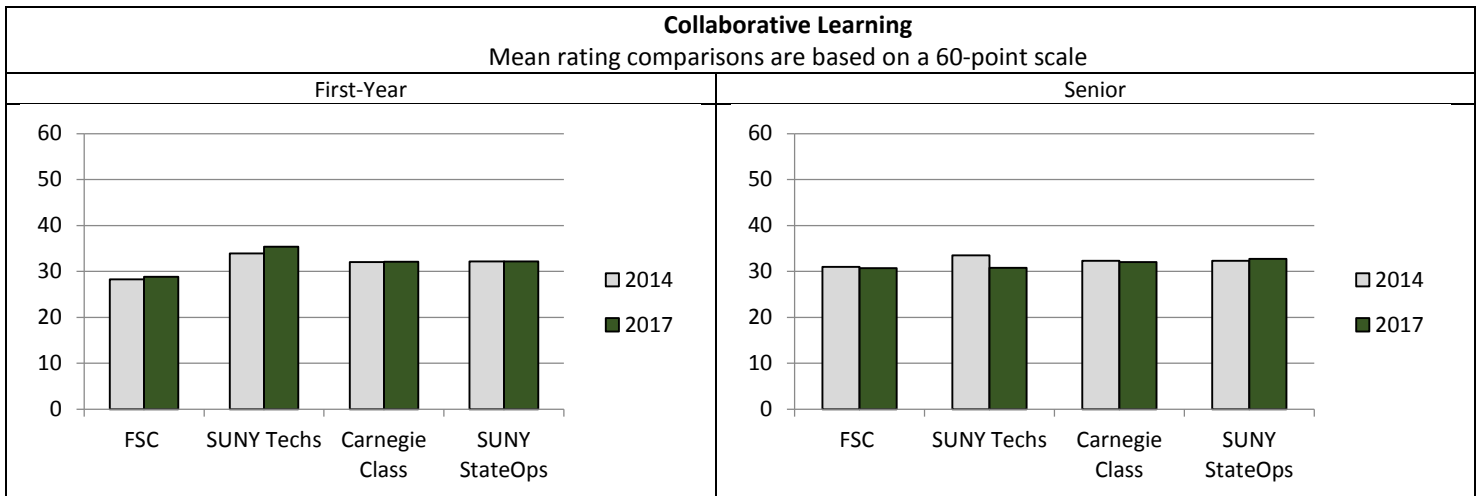
Our first-year students are spending more time reading than their peers and the vast majority (85%) feel that Farmingdale as an institution emphasizes studying very much or quite a bit.

Learning with Peers

Scores for this theme are broken down into two categories: collaborative learning and discussions with diverse groups.

Collaborative Learning. The mean-rating score for collaborative learning is based on four questions about the frequency in which students:

- Asked another student to help them understand course material
- Explained course material to one or more students
- Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students
- Worked with other students on course projects or assignments

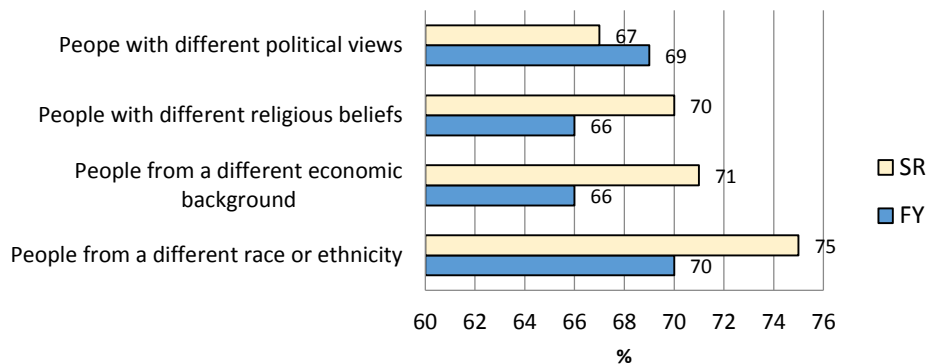


Farmingdale’s first-year and senior students generally continued to collaborate with other students less often than their peers at other institutions, which may be a result of the larger commuter population at Farmingdale. Approximately one-quarter of our first-year and one-fifth of our seniors never prepared for an exam by discussing or working through course material with other students during the year. However, when the collaboration was assigned, such as working with other students on course projects, ratings were higher, particularly for seniors (56% do so at least often).

Discussions with Diverse Others. Scores for discussions with diverse others are based on four questions about the frequency in which students had discussions with:

- People from a race or ethnicity other than your own
- People from an economic background other than your own
- People with religious beliefs other than your own
- People with political views other than your own

% students who responded they "very often" or "often" had discussions with...



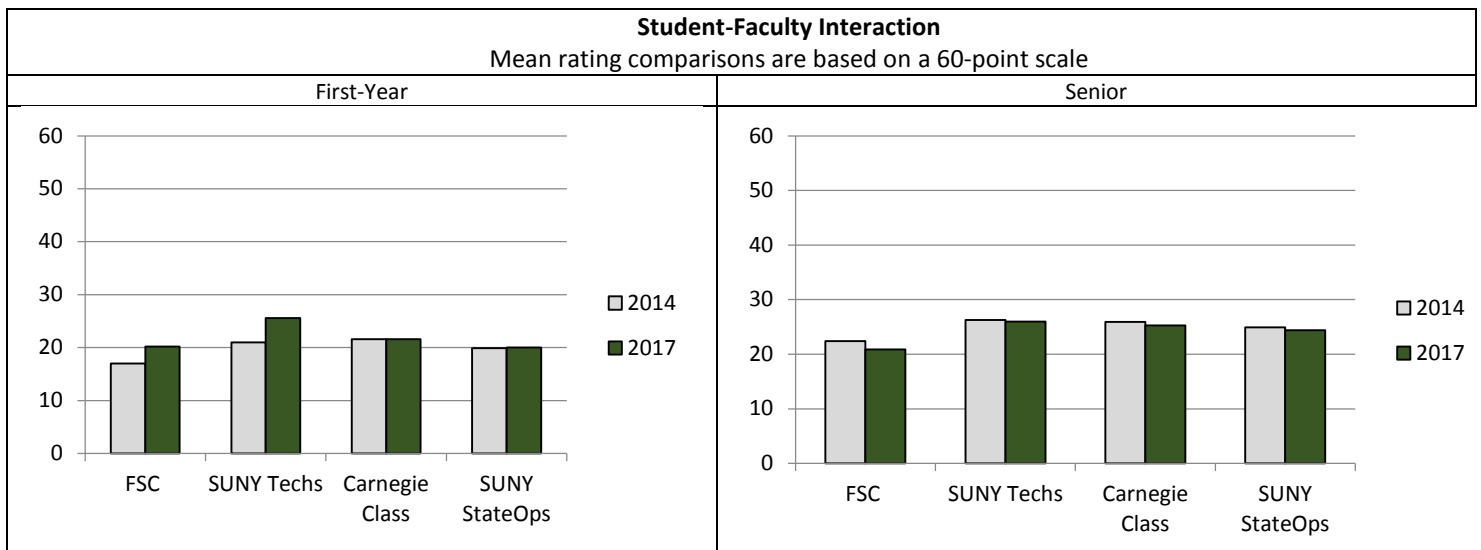
The percentage of first-year students and seniors who often had discussions with diverse people was fairly comparable across all institutions. Most of our students, particularly seniors, often have discussions with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs, predominantly people from a different race or ethnicity.

Experiences with Faculty

Scores for this theme are broken down into two categories: Student-Faculty interaction and Effective Teaching Practices.

Student-Faculty Interaction. The mean rating score for student-faculty interaction is based on four questions about the frequency in which students:

- Talked about career plans with a faculty member
- Worked with faculty on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)
- Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class
- Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

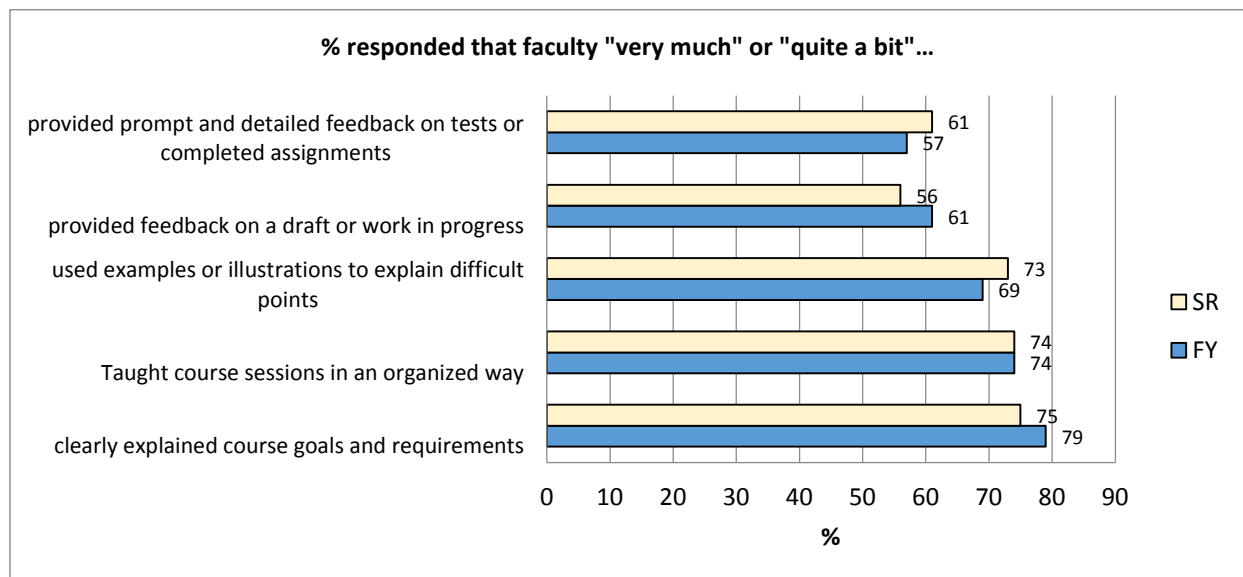


Both FY and SR average scores were lower than SUNY Techs, Carnegie classification and SUNY State-Ops. However comparative scores for FY students was up significantly compared to the last survey administration.

Student comments in NSSE confirm that Farmingdale students think highly of our faculty, but for many students, interaction with faculty occurs mainly during class time. More than one-half of our first-year students and seniors never worked with a faculty member on a committee or student group, and over one-third never discussed course topics with a faculty member outside of class during the school year.

Effective Teaching Practices. The scores for effective teaching practice are based on five questions about how much faculty:

- Clearly explained course goals and requirements
- Taught course sessions in an organized way
- Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points
- Provided feedback on a draft or work in progress
- Provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments



According to both first-year students and seniors, the vast majority of Farmingdale faculty is using examples to explain difficult points, teaching courses in an organized way, and clearly explaining course goals and requirements. Scores were generally on par with those of our peer institutions. Fewer positive ratings were indicated for feedback and response time on tests and assignments.

Campus Environment

Scores for this theme are broken down into two categories: Quality of Interactions and Supportive Environment.

Quality of Interactions. The scores for quality of interactions are based on five questions rating students' interactions with students, advisors, faculty and staff.

% rating a 6 or 7 on a scale from 1=poor to 7=excellent in their interactions with...

	FY			SR		
	2014	2017	Change	2014	2017	Change
students	44	47	+3 ppt.	54	50	- 4 ppt.
academic advisors	37	61	+ 24 ppt.	43	48	+ 5 ppt.
faculty	36	46	+10 ppt.	51	51	NC
student services staff	29	46	+17 ppt.	40	38	- 2 ppt.
other administrative staff and offices	30	47	+17 ppt.	42	41	- 1 ppt.

Among first-year students, ratings for quality of interactions were higher than our peers across all groups, except faculty. The quality of our first-year students' interactions with individuals on campus has improved significantly compared to the first-year students in 2014. The greatest gain and rating was for interaction with academic advisors (+24 ppt. to 61%). Despite improvement, less than one-half gave high ratings to interactions with other students, faculty and staff.

Conversely, ratings given by Farmingdale seniors were not as good relative to our peer institutions. Although ratings for academic advisors increased for our seniors, less than one-half gave them high ratings. About one-half also gave high ratings to other students and faculty and academic advisors. A lower percentage gave high ratings to staff.

Supportive Environment. This category is based on eight questions regarding how much students' feel their institution emphasizes:

% responding "very much" or "quite a bit" about how much the institution emphasized...	2017	
	FY	SR
Providing support to help students succeed academically	78%	65%
Using learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)	77%	59%
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds	64%	48%
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	70%	52%
Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling...)	60%	49%
Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities	45%	26%
Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletics, etc.)	57%	37%
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	43%	31%

First-year students perceive Farmingdale as providing a supportive environment more than the first-year students in the last survey administration. The vast majority of first-year students feel that FSC places a lot of emphasis on providing support to help students succeed academically (78%) and for using learning support services (77%). Although 70% feel that Farmingdale places a lot of emphasis on providing opportunities for students to be involved socially, fewer feel that there is much emphasis on attending campus activities (57%) and attending events that address important issues (43%).

The comparative average score for Farmingdale seniors in this category were significantly below all peer groups and were lower those in the last survey administration. Most of our seniors (65%) feel that Farmingdale places at least quite a bit of emphasis on providing support to help students succeed academically, and only about one-quarter feel that the institution places a lot of emphasis on ‘helping you manage non-academic responsibilities’. The majority of our seniors reported high institutional emphasis on items related to coursework support, but fewer than half perceived that FSC places much emphasis on attending campus activities and events that address important issues.

Participation

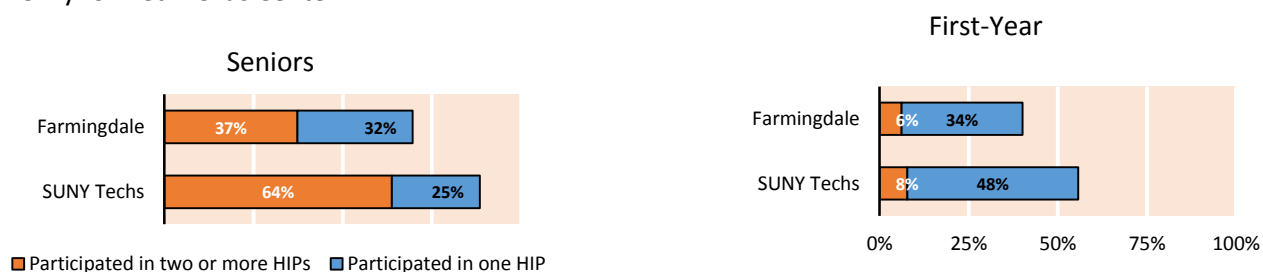
In terms of participation in co-curricular activities, Farmingdale student participation is significantly below the students at all of our peer institutions. Almost one-half (48%) of our first-year students and 64% of our seniors indicated that they do not participate in organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternities or sororities, or play intercollegiate or intramural sports in a typical week. 73% of our first-year students and 67% of our seniors stated that they never attended an art exhibit, play, or other arts performance during the school year.

However, the percentage of our first-year students who participate in such events and activities has increased compared to 2014 (+ 7 ppt. to 52% participating at least an hour a week) while participation levels have held constant for our seniors.

High-Impact Practices

Because of their positive effects on student learning and retention, special undergraduate opportunities, such as learning communities, service-learning, research with a faculty member, study abroad, internships and culminating senior experiences are called high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008).

Farmingdale students’ participation in high-impact practices is significantly below students at SUNY Techs, Carnegie classification, and SUNY State-Ops. 70% of our seniors indicated they have participated in at least one high-impact practice and 40% of first-year students indicated the same. The highest participation rates among our seniors were service learning and internship or field experience. The lowest participation rates among our seniors were in study abroad, research with faculty and learning community. However, our comparative standing is expected to improve in future survey administrations as applied learning becomes a graduation requirement and students utilize the services of the newly formed Nexus Center.



Academic Advising

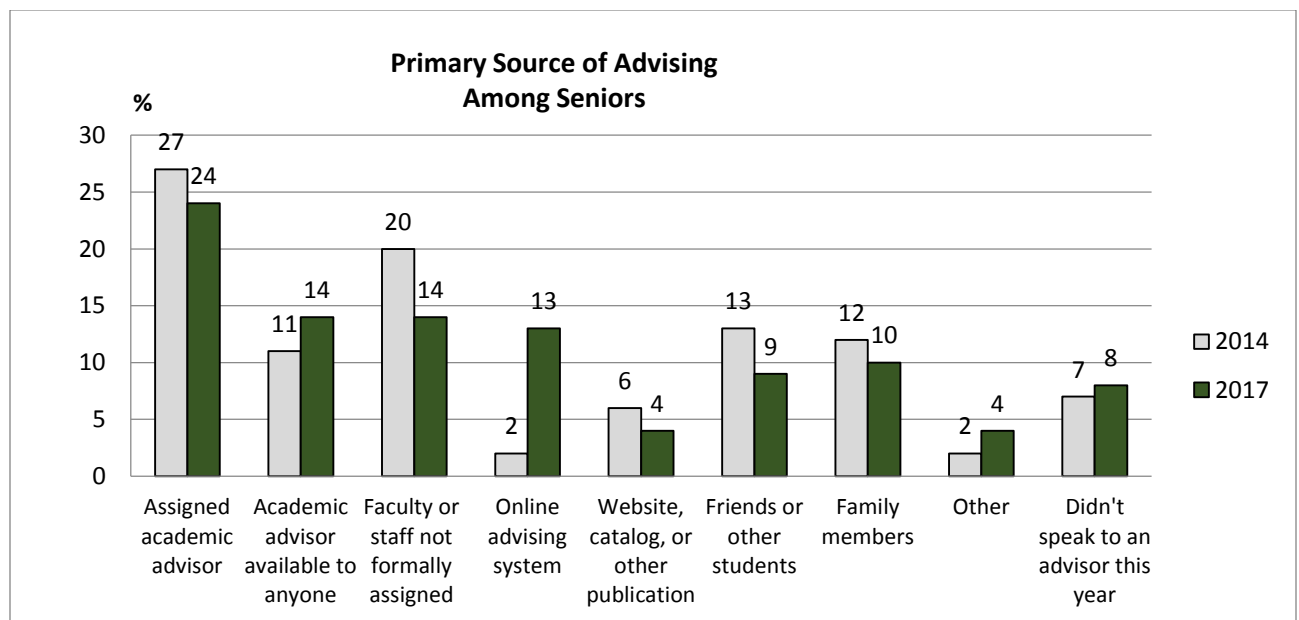
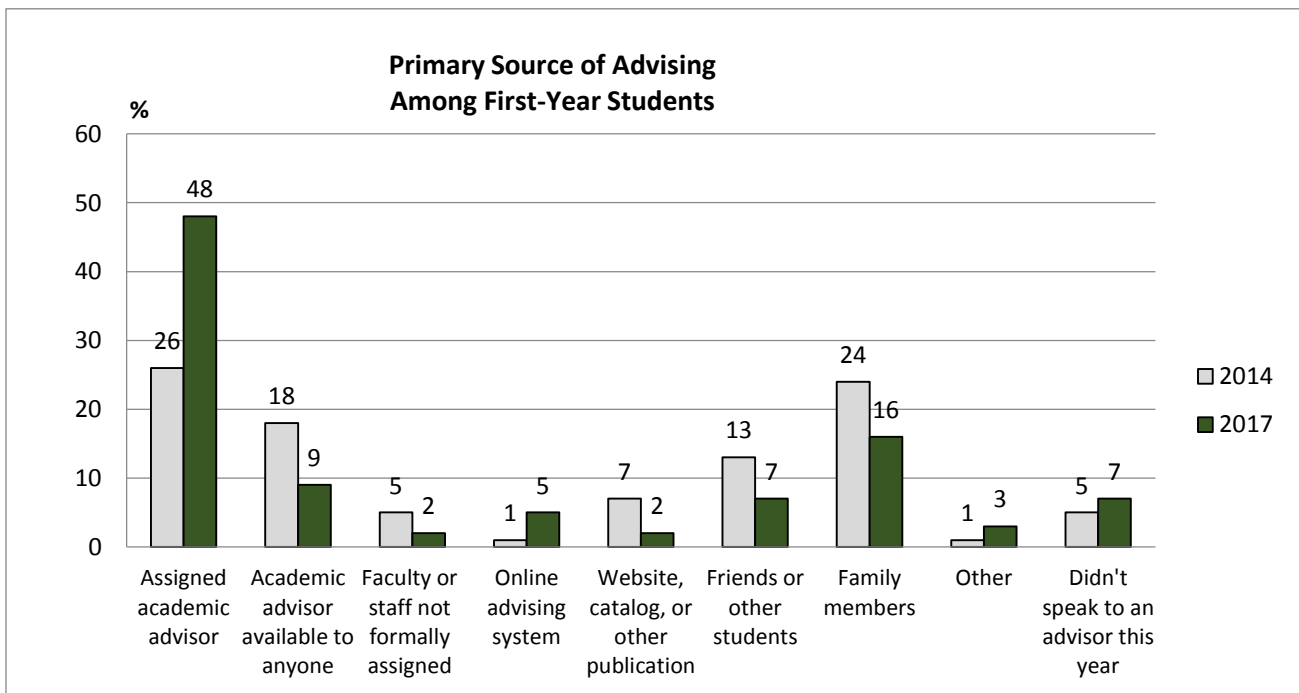
The questions regarding academic advising were an add-on module to the survey, and therefore, our sole comparison group is institutions in our Carnegie classification. Farmingdale included this module in 2014.

Farmingdale fared very well among our first-year students compared to our benchmark with significantly higher ratings in frequency, accessibility, receptiveness, help with difficulties, and types of information provided by academic advisors. In addition, scores are up compared to the FSC first-year cohort in the last survey administration.

Conversely, seniors had significantly lower ratings in the same categories versus responses from students in our Carnegie classification, and ratings were flat or declined slightly in some cases versus the prior administration of NSSE.

	First-Year Students			Seniors		
	2014	2017	Change	2014	2017	Change
Avg. # of times discussed academic interests, course selections, or academic performance with an academic advisor in academic year	2.0	2.5	↑	2.1	1.9	↓
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors have been available when needed (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.8	3.1	↑	2.8	2.7	↓
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors have listened closely to your concerns and questions (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.8	3.2	↑	2.8	2.8	
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors have informed you of important deadlines (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.8	3.2	↑	2.7	2.6	↓
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors helped you understand academic rules and policies (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.7	3.2	↑	2.5	2.6	↑
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors informed you of academic support options - tutoring, study groups, writing help (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.7	3.1	↑	2.5	2.5	
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors provided useful information about courses (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.8	3.3	↑	2.7	2.7	
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors helped you when you had academic difficulties (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.6	3.0	↑	2.6	2.5	↓
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors helped you get information on special opportunities - study abroad, internships, research projects, etc. (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.4	3.0	↑	2.5	2.3	↓
Avg. Rating on Extent to which academic advisors discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans (1=very little to 4=very much)	2.4	2.9	↑	2.3	2.3	

The most common primary source of advising among Farmingdale’s first-year students and seniors is their assigned advisor, but usage has declined among seniors and increased significantly among first-year students. Less than one-quarter of our seniors named their assigned advisor as their primary advisor compared to almost one-half of first-year students. Farmingdale seniors are using online advising as their primary source of advising much more than the seniors in the last survey administration did. Despite declines versus 2014, approximately one-quarter report using sources such as the college website, college catalog, friends or family as their primary source of academic advisement.



Inclusiveness & Engagement with Diversity

The questions regarding Inclusiveness & Engagement with Diversity were an add-on module to the survey, and therefore, our sole comparison group is public institutions.

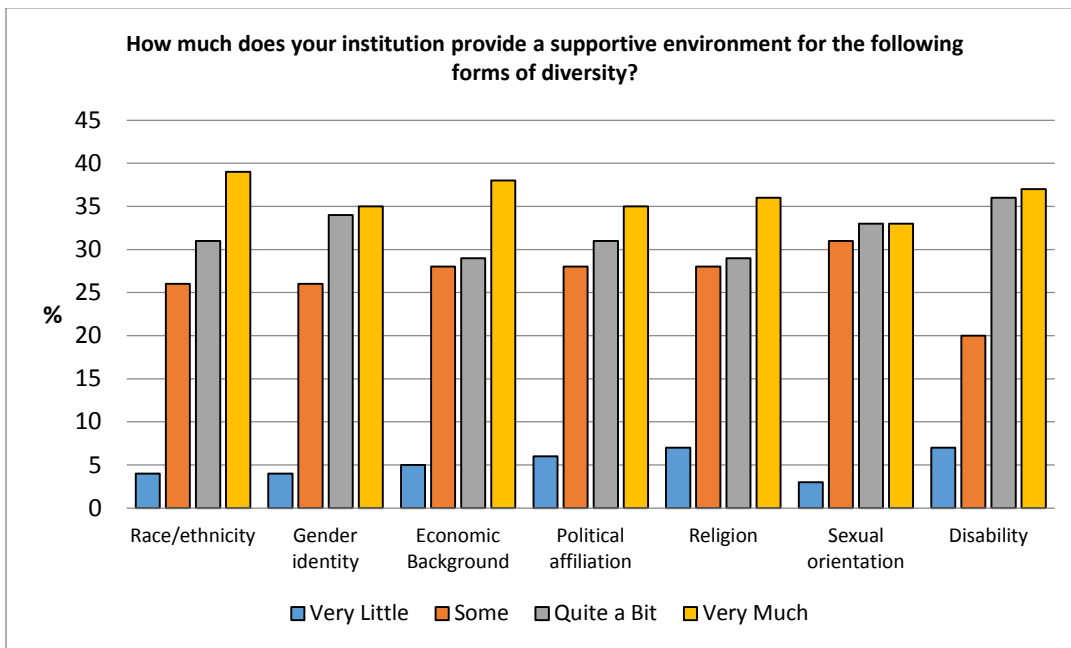
Responses were at par with public institutions for our first-year students in terms of exposure to inclusive teaching practices and intercultural learning, perceptions of institutional values and commitment to diversity, and participation in diversity-related programming and coursework. Conversely, our seniors' ratings were lower in all categories versus public institutions.

In general, Farmingdale students perceive that diversity is emphasized more by the institution than it is in their coursework.

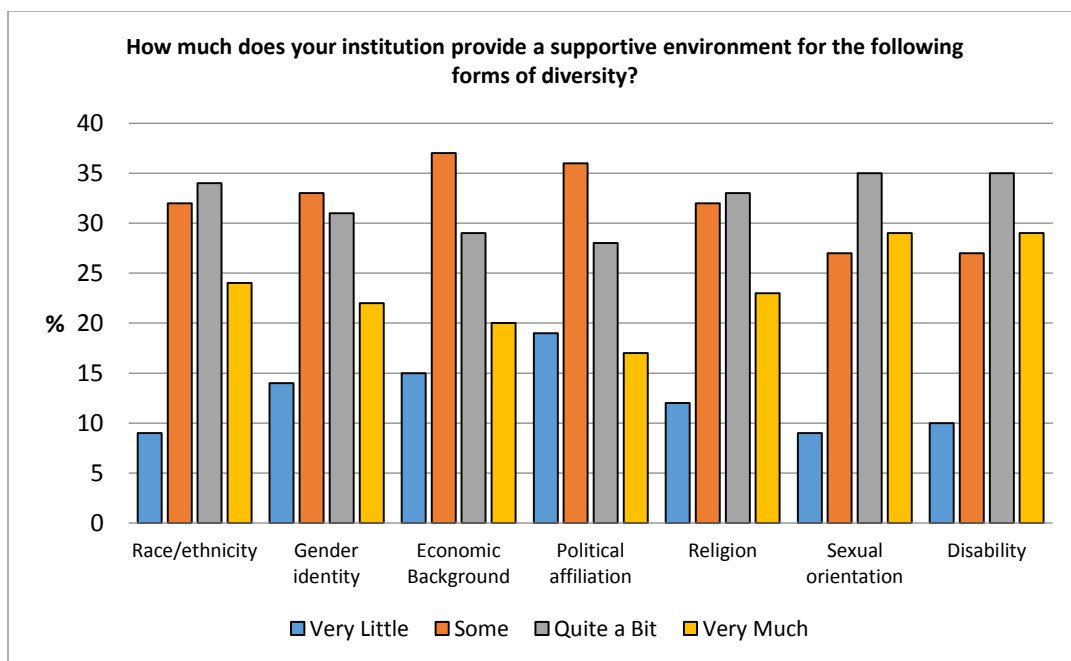
How much does your institution emphasize the following? 1 = very little... 4 = very much	Avg. Score	
	FY	SR
Demonstrating commitment to Diversity	3.0	2.7
Providing students with the resources needed for success in a multicultural world	2.9	2.6
Creating an overall sense of community among students	3.1	2.6
Ensuring that you are not stigmatized because of your identity	3.0	2.7
Providing info about anti-discrimination and harassment policies	2.9	2.6
Taking allegations of discrimination or harassment seriously	3.1	2.7
Helping students develop the skills to confront discrimination and harassment	2.8	2.5
How much does your coursework emphasize the following? 1 = very little... 4 = very much		
Developing the skills necessary to work effectively with people from various backgrounds	2.6	2.6
Recognizing your own cultural norms and biases	2.6	2.4
Sharing your own perspectives and experiences	2.8	2.6
Exploring your own background through projects, assignments, or programs	2.4	2.3
Learning about other cultures	2.4	2.3
Discussing issues of equity or privilege	2.4	2.2
Respecting the expression of diverse ideas	2.8	2.6

The vast majority of our first-year students and seniors feel that Farmingdale provides a supportive environment quite a bit or very much for various categories of diversity. However, a smaller, yet substantial, percentage of our seniors than first-year students feel that Farmingdale provides very little support, particularly for diverse political affiliations (19%).

First Year Students



Seniors



Respondent Profile

Farmingdale's respondents to NSSE were fairly close to the actual population of baccalaureate students in terms of distribution of race/ethnicity, major and full-time status. There were a higher percentage of women in the respondent population than the actual population, as women tend to respond to surveys in higher rates than men (Curtin et al 2000; Moore & Tarnai, 2002; Singer et al 2000).

2017 NSSE respondents vs. actual population	<i>First-year</i>		<i>Senior</i>	
	Respondent %	Population %	Respondent %	Population %
Female	56	43	51	41
Full-time	94	95	80	78
First-time, first-year	94	93	N/A	N/A
Race/ethnicity				
Am. Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Asian	14	13	8	7
Black or African American	5	10	9	10
Hispanic or Latino	22	19	15	14
Native Hawaiian/Other Pac. Isl.	0	0	0	0
White	55	52	60	61
Other	0	0	0	0
Foreign or nonresident alien	1	1	2	2
Two or more races/ethnicities	1	3	2	2
Unknown	1	2	4	4

As we know from results of the 2015 campus Student Opinion Survey, our students are more likely than many students at our peer institutions to work off-campus and work more hours, belong to a minority racial or ethnic group, and be the first-generation in their family to attend college.