

# NSSE 2011 Executive Summary

## Dalton State College – Freshmen



This summary identifies Dalton State College's freshmen's perceptions of the education they have received at Dalton State. All statements are derived from the 2011 NSSE survey, with a particular emphasis on strengths, weaknesses, and comparisons between Dalton State's survey results and the mean results from the Georgia System and comparative institutions.

*The survey results from approximately 131 respondents suggest the following.*

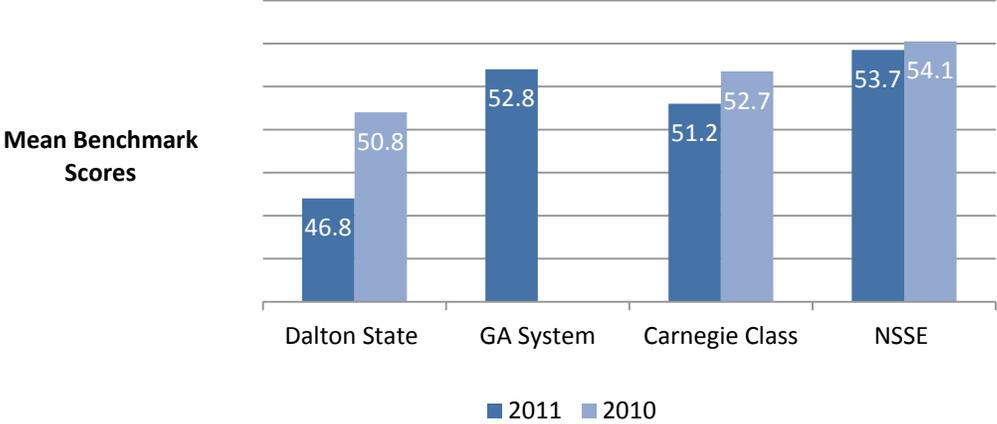
### • Level of Academic Challenge

*"Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance."*

For the first time, responses from Dalton State's students were compared to those from the previous year with peer institutions; this provides the opportunity to compare Dalton State's population with those that are similar.

- Scores for freshmen responses on the "2011 Level of Academic Challenge" (LCA) benchmark decreased from the previous year.
- Our freshmen spend less time preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, and doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities) than do their peers.
- Freshmen believe that Dalton State faculty assigns fewer textbooks and books to students as part of coursework than other schools; however, their reading for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment ranks higher than those of their peer groups.
- Dalton State respondents report writing few 1-5 page papers, along with fewer 5-19 page papers, but more Dalton State freshmen wrote at least one paper more than 20 pages in length than freshmen at other schools.
- Freshmen believe that Dalton State coursework does not heavily emphasize analyzing the basic elements of an idea, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components.
- Dalton State freshmen reported less institutional emphasis on 'higher-level learning' than their peers (i.e., synthesizing information into new, more complex interpretations and relationships).
- Freshmen think that Dalton State does not emphasize enough the skill of making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions.
- Freshmen believe that Dalton State classes do not emphasize enough the application of theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations.
- Dalton State freshmen do not come to class without completing readings or assignments nearly as often than freshmen do at other institutions.
- This year Dalton State freshmen respondents were 50% non-traditional and 50% traditional, compared to 29% non-traditional and 71% traditional in 2010. The large number of non-traditional students is explained in part by the fact that 56% of freshmen now work for pay off-campus and 77% of freshmen provide care for dependents.

**Overall Level of Academic Challenge Compared with Other Institutions**



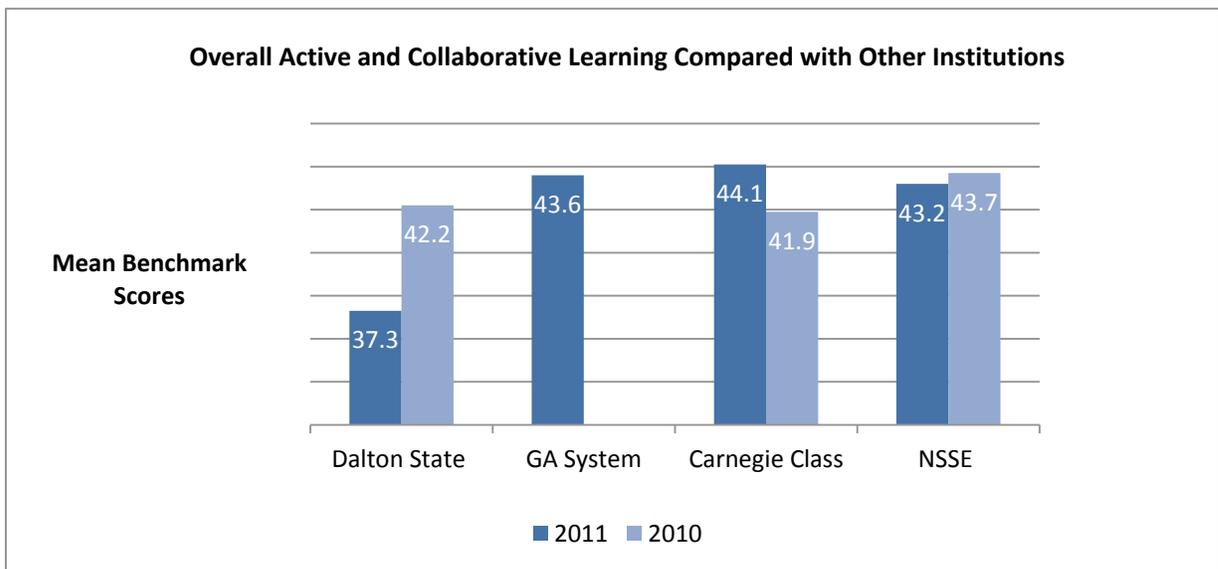
*The USG System was added as a comparison in 2011.*

## ● Active and Collaborative Learning

*“Students learn more when they are intensely involved in their education and asked to think about what they are learning in different settings. Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the complex, unscripted problems they will encounter daily during and after college.”*

Freshmen as a whole do not perceive their institution as providing active and collaborative learning. Dalton State’s score in this area was much lower than its Carnegie Class, USG, and NSSE 2011 benchmarks.

- The amount of time our freshmen students worked with other students on projects *during* classes decreased this year.
- The amount of time our students worked with classmates *outside* of class time to prepare class assignments was drastically lower than the time spent by students at other institutions.
- Dalton State freshmen reported an increase in the amount of participation in community-based projects (e.g. service learning) as part of their regular courses. However, their participation was still far less than that of freshmen at other institutions.
- Dalton State’s freshmen students are very weak at using electronic mediums (chat groups, instant messaging, email, etc.) to discuss or complete assignments.



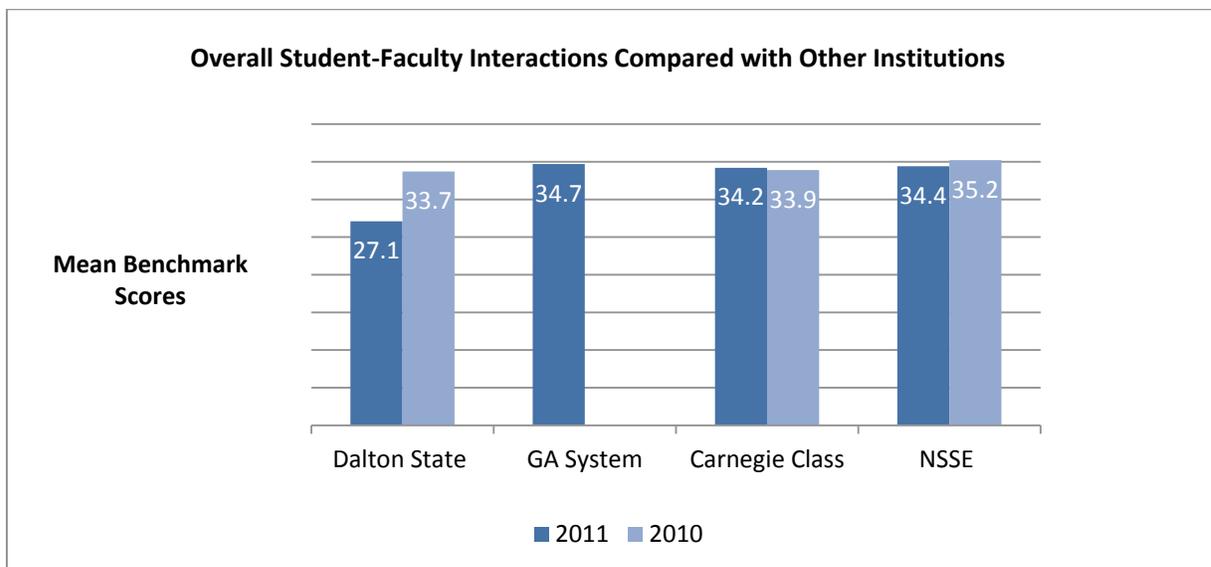
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## • Student-Faculty Interactions

*“Students learn firsthand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom. As a result, their teachers become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, life-long learning.”*

In comparison with the other institutions in this study, Dalton State freshmen ranked low on overall student-faculty interaction.

- There has been a notable decrease in the amount of time freshmen work with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.). The amount of time is also low in comparison to other institutions’ benchmarks.
- The amount of time Dalton State freshmen discussed ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class decreased. We scored low compared with benchmarks, as well.
- Dalton State students were less likely than last year to talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor.
- Dalton State students’ perceptions of the extent to which they received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on academic performance were less positive than last year, especially in contrast with other institutions.



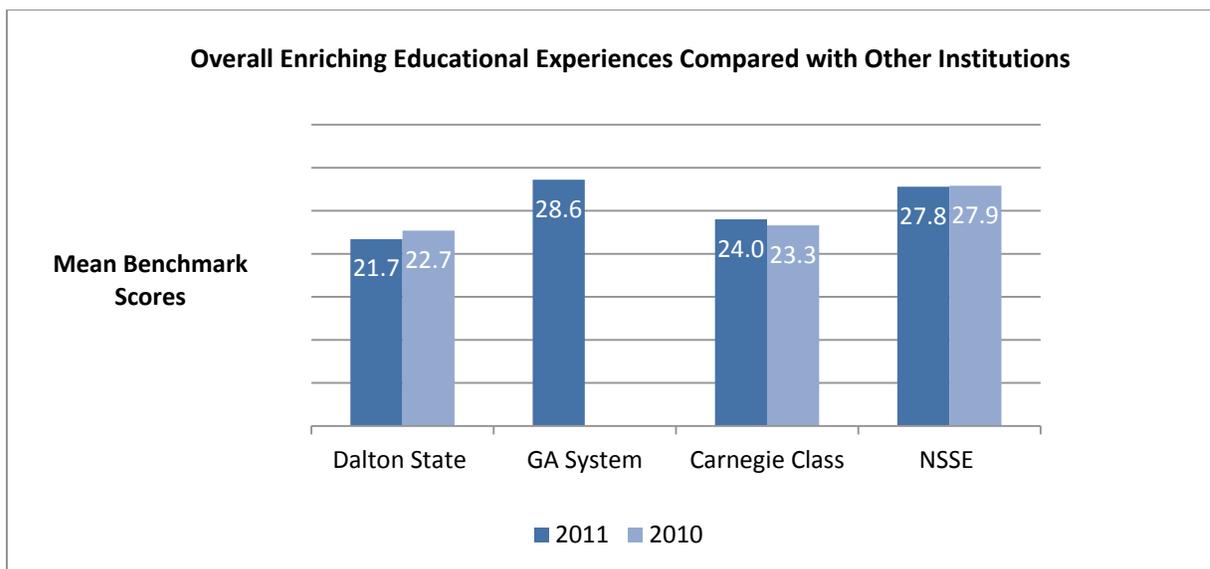
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## ● Enriching Educational Experiences

*“Complementary learning opportunities in and out of class augment academic programs. Diversity experiences teach students valuable things about themselves and others. Technology facilitates collaboration between peers and instructors. Internships, community service, and senior capstone courses provide opportunities to integrate and apply knowledge.”*

In comparison with 2010, Dalton State ranked lower this year on providing enriching educational experiences. Our score is also substantially lower than the benchmarks for the USG system, our Carnegie class, and the average for NSSE schools.

- Freshmen do not think they include many diverse perspectives in classroom discussions and reading assignments.
- Freshmen students seldom participate in foreign language coursework.
- Dalton State freshmen rarely attend art exhibits, plays, dances, music, theater, or other cultural performances.
- Our freshmen do not often participate in physical fitness activities.
- They also do not often participate in community services or volunteer work.
- Our freshmen report spending less time relaxing and socializing than do freshmen at other schools.
- Freshmen spend much less time participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, etc.) and campus events than other schools. This is, again, in part due to the fact that many of our freshmen students are non-traditional, with significant work and family responsibilities.
- However, similar to patterns seen in the previous year, our freshmen feel they are taught to write and speak clearly and effectively.
- Dalton State freshmen students (along with others in the GA system) continue to vote in state, local, and national elections more often than freshmen in other schools.



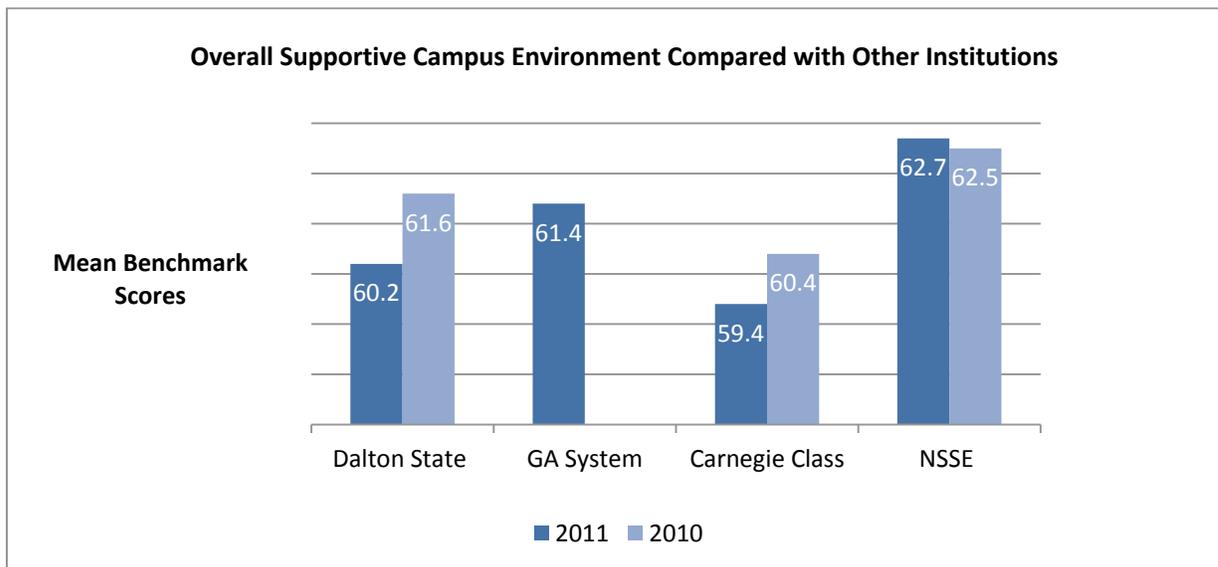
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## • Supportive Campus Environment

*“Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.”*

In comparison to the other institutions in the study, Dalton State ranks above the Carnegie Class institutions but below all others in providing a supportive campus environment.

- Our freshmen continue to commute to class at a higher rate than do students at other schools.
- As last year, the quality of freshmen relationships with administrative personnel is comparable with peer institutions.
- The freshmen think the College provides substantial support to succeed academically but not socially.
- Dalton State freshmen responses indicate the campus environment does not provide the support they need to cope with their non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.).



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