Assessing and Strengthening General Education Using NSSE: Lessons from the Field

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Liberal Education & America's Promise

- **Foster liberal education outcomes in all students, including . . .**
- **Through challenging studies in. . .**
- **With a constant focus on liberal education outcomes …**
- **With special attention to access and success**

With a constant focus on liberal education outcomes …

- *across general education and majors, including pre-professional studies*
- *at progressively more challenging levels of learning from first year through final studies*
- *using active, hands-on, collaborative, and inquiry-based pedagogies*
- *framed by milestone and capstone assessments that help students deepen, integrate, and demonstrate their learning*
- *enhanced by well- designed programs of academic and social support for all students*

Considering student engagement and general education assessment…

- **NSSE is one tool to measure and monitor general education goals and outcomes and to assess LEAP goals, including success for students from underserved communities**
  - **How might you use NSSE results to consider students' experiences in general education?**
  - **How do you use information to advance LEAP goals?**

National Survey of Student Engagement
(pronounced "nessie")

Community College Survey of Student Engagement
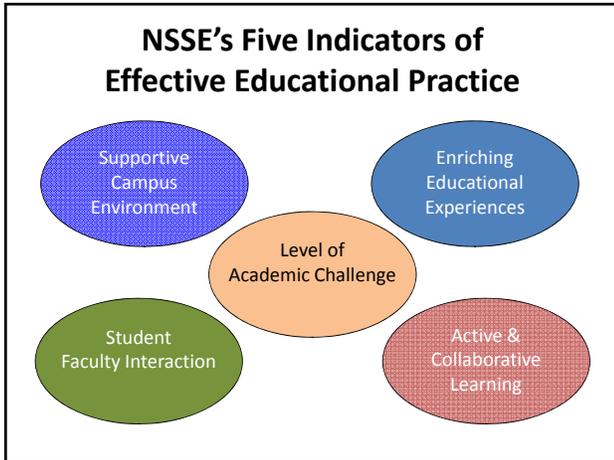*(pronounced "sessie")*

College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

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NSSE Review:

"NESSIE"

- NSSE is administered annually (spring) **first-year** & **senior** students at participating colleges and universities
  - Results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college; the extent to which they perceive their institutions support their academic and personal development.
    - Sample items: Frequency of active learning, integrated learning; Participation in learning community, service learning, senior capstone; coursework emphasizing analysis, synthesis, reading and writing.
  - NSSE items represent **empirically confirmed 'good practices'**; they reflect processes and behaviors associated with desired outcomes of college.

NSSE's Five Indicators of Effective Educational Practice

- Supportive Campus Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Level of Academic Challenge
- Student Faculty Interaction
- Active & Collaborative Learning

NSSE data related to General Education Assessment

- **Educational Gains and Personal Development (item 11)**
- **Deep Approaches to Learning**
  - Higher order thinking (item 2b,c,d,e)
  - Integrated learning (items 1d,e,i,p,t)
  - Reflective learning (items 6d,e,f)
- **Writing items (3c,d,e; 1c, 11c)**
- **Diversity Experiences (1e,u,v;10c,11l)**
- **Service-learning (1k, 7b, 11o)**
- **Collaborative learning (1g,h,j;7c,11h)**

NSSE & Educational and Personal Gains

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas (% "very much" or "quite a bit") – 2007 Cohort

Self-Reported Educational and Personal Gains from College	First-Year Students NSSE 2007	Seniors NSSE 2007
Thinking critically and analytically	80%	87%
Acquiring a broad general education	80%	83%
Working effectively with others	69%	76%
Writing clearly and effectively	71%	75%
Learning effectively on your own	67%	73%
Using computing and information technology	72%	79%
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	58%	67%
Analyzing quantitative problems	66%	72%
Speaking clearly and effectively	61%	70%
Understanding yourself	59%	62%
Developing a personal code of values & ethics	53%	55%
Solving complex real-world problems	53%	59%
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	52%	51%
Contributing to the welfare of your community	42%	44%
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	32%	28%
Voting in local, state, or national elections	26%	32%

Linking NSSE Questions with VSU's Expected Outcomes

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US Society
11i Voting in local, state, or national elections
11o Contributing to the welfare of your community

Cross-cultural Perspectives
11l Understanding people of other racial, ethnic backgrounds

Computer & Info Technology
11g Using computing and information technology

Written and Spoken Expression
11c Writing clearly and effectively
11d Speaking clearly and effectively

Scientific & Mathematical Principles
11f Analyzing quantitative problems

Diverse Cultural Heritages
11l Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds

Ability to Analyze & Make Inferences
11e Thinking critically and analytically
11m Solving complex, real-world problems

Principles and Employment of Ethics
11n Developing personal code of values and ethics

Overall General Outcomes
11a Acquiring a broad general education
11b Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills
11h Working effectively with others
13 Evaluation of your entire experience at this institution

NSSE and Learning Outcomes…

Indicators of student learning processes and outcomes: Writing in the First Year

- **To what extent are FY students developing their writing skills?**
  - % FY writing papers > 5 pgs.
  - % FY students who prepare 2 or more drafts
  - % FY worked on paper requiring integrating ideas, sources
  - % FY reporting substantial gains in writing effectively

First-Year Students and Writing at NSSEville State

What might these data suggest for First Year Student writing at NSSEville State?

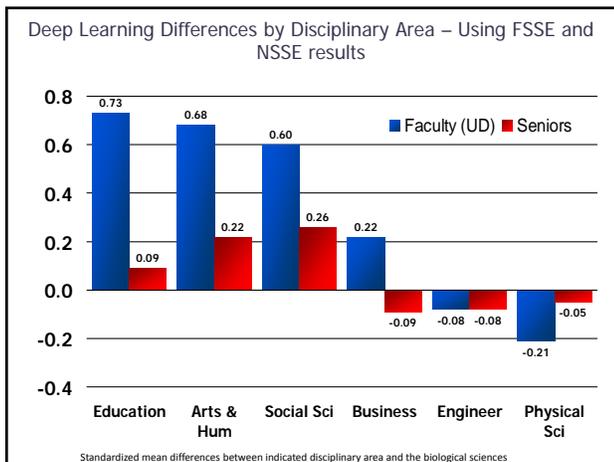| NSSE Writing Items	Compared to Select Peers (above +; comparable =; below -)
58% FY have <u>not</u> written a paper 20pgs. or more	−
65% FY have only written between 1-4 "medium" (5-19 pgs) length papers	=
20% FY students have <u>never</u> prepared 2 or more drafts	=
70% FY students "often" or "very often" worked on paper requiring integrating ideas, sources	+
76% FY reporting "substantial" gains (quite a bit + very much) in writing effectively	=

Essential Learning Outcome:
NSSE Deep/Integrative Learning

- Integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/writing
- Put together ideas from different courses
- Discussed ideas with faculty members outside of class
- Discussed ideas with others outside of class
- Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory

- Synthesizing & organizing ideas, info., or experiences
- Making judgments about the value of information
- Applying theories to practical problems or in new situations
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views
- Tried to better understand someone else's views
- Learned something that changed how you understand an issue

Ex: Deep Learning Items Reflective of "Heritage College" Integrative/Interdisciplinary Learning Goals

	First-Years	Seniors
1. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	78% +	86%+
2. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	57% +	65% +
3. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	40% -	50% =
4. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	51% -	60% =

% "often" +"very often"; Compared to Select Peers (above +; comparable =; below -)

Deep Learning Differences by Disciplinary Area – Using FSSE and NSSE results

Standardized mean differences between indicated disciplinary area and the biological sciences

Faculty (UD): Education 0.73, Arts & Hum 0.68, Social Sci 0.60, Business 0.22, Engineer -0.08, Physical Sci -0.21
Seniors: Education 0.09, Arts & Hum 0.22, Social Sci 0.26, Business -0.09, Engineer -0.08, Physical Sci -0.05

Assessing and Strengthening General Education Using NSSE: UNL Lessons –
Jessica Jonson, Ph.D., Director of Institutional Assessment

Current State of General Education at University of Nebraska -Lincoln

- Preparing for 2009-2010 implementation of new program
- ACE: Outcomes-based program
  What should all undergraduate students--irrespective of their majors and career aspirations--know or be able to do upon graduation?
- Build upon AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

http://ace.unl.edu

How NSSE Results informed General Education Reform

- Results were shared with planning committee
  – responses to higher order thinking items and gain items were most concerning

- Results confirmed concerns that gen ed program:
  – Not properly assessed
  – Had drifted from original goals
  – Students did not understand relevance
  – Out of step with national trends

Aligning Gains & ACE Outcomes

ACE Outcome 1: Write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure.

NSSE Item 11c   Writing clearly and effectively

Aligning Gains & ACE Outcomes

ACE Outcome 8: Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance to society.

NSSE Item 11n: Develop a personal code of values and ethics

NSSE Item 11o: Contributing to the welfare of your community
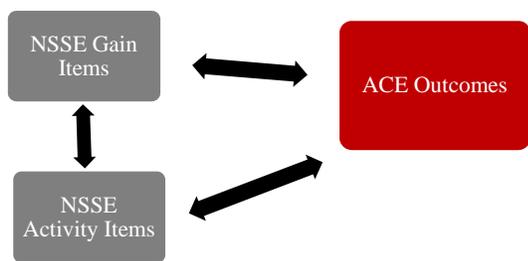
Aligning Gains & ACE Outcomes

ACE Outcome 10: Generate a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.

NSSE Item 11e: Thinking critically and analytically

NSSE Item 11m: Solving complex real-world problems

Considering Process & Gains

NSSE Gain Items

ACE Outcomes

NSSE Activity Items

Aligning Activity & ACE Outcomes

ACE Outcome 1: Write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure.

NSSE Items:
- 1c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in.
- 1d. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources.
- 3c.- 3e. Number of written papers or reports

Aligning Activity & ACE Outcomes

ACE Outcome 9: Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue.

NSSE Items:
- 1e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.
- 6d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue.
- 6e. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective.
- 7f. Study abroad.

How NSSE will be used to assess UNL's new program

Benchmarking and Trend data (2007 results)

Affirm what desire to occur in courses does occur (FSSE)

Consider along with direct evidence of student learning and within context of institutional assessment of learning outcomes

Initally consider by a representative institutional group

Benchmarking & Trends

2007 NSSE	• Previous Program
2009-2010	• ACE Implemented
2010 NSSE	• ACE's First Year
2013 NSSE	• ACE's first 4 years

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The Drake Curriculum, NSSE, and Continuous Improvement

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It's the Mission

Drake's mission is to provide an **exceptional learning environment** that prepares students for **meaningful personal lives**, **professional accomplishments**, and **responsible global citizenship**. The Drake experience is distinguished by **collaborative learning** among students, faculty, and staff, and by the **integration of the liberal arts and sciences with professional preparation.**

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LEAP Connections

LEAP	Drake Mission
Breadth of knowledge	Intercultural knowledge and competencies
Inquiry, analysis, critical thinking	Capacity to develop reasoned values and arguments
Ethical reasoning	Reflective practice
Civic knowledge and engagement	Responsible global citizenship
Integrative learning	Team work and problem-solving

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Mission Explication – Student Learning Outcomes

2004/05 –Development of Mission Explication-learning outcomes
2005: Mapping the outcomes against the current Drake Curriculum and preliminary assessment of outcomes using NSSE
Summer 2005 – Mission working groups made proposals on active learning, critical thinking, and engaged citizenship.
April 2006 – "Achieving Mission Learning Outcomes Through the Drake Curriculum," approved by Faculty Senate
2006/07 – Curriculum development workshops for the first Engaged Citizen Experience were held in January, May, and August 2007
2007/08 – First year of implementation – supported partially by an Association of American Colleges and Universities' Bringing Theory to Practice" grant.
2008/09 – Drake Curriculum Task Force starts general education review

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Drake and NSSE

• Annual use 2001-2006, now in alternating years
• Developing direct assessment
  – Use of Collegiate Learning Assessment, 2008-2010
  – Critical Thinking rubric (campus-developed)
  – Proposal to develop general education e-portfolio
  – Specific instruments – Civic Engagement Survey

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Drake and NSSE

Internal Audiences
- Deans' Council
- Faculty Senate
- University Curriculum Committee
- Drake Curriculum Analysis and Planning Committee
- Drake Curriculum Task Force
- Individual colleges and schools

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Drake's NSSE Transparency

Drake, NSSE, and 2008 self-study for HLC Accreditation

Higher Learning Commission Criterion 3:

– Student Learning –Primarily used NSSE questions that best reflected mission outcomes as indirect evidence.

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NSSE Comparative Data Example: Exceptional Learning Environment

2006 Benchmark Data

First year students Drake have statistically significant higher scores over our Master's peer institutions in:
- *Level of Academic Challenge:* 53.8 vs. 50.5
- *Active and Collaborative Learning:* 45.0 vs 40.9
- *Enriching Educational Experiences:* 29.7 vs. 25.8
- *Supportive Campus Environment:* 62.4 vs. 58.6
- *Student-Faculty Interaction:* 32.8 vs. 31.8 (not sig.)

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Self-Study Example: Meaningful Personal Life

Students are achieving the knowledge and skills necessary for Meaningful Personal Lives.

- Take responsibility for their own learning:
  – **76%** of first year students and **73%** of seniors report that Drake has successfully helped them to learn effectively on their own.
- Context necessary for developing meaningful personal lives:
  – **81%** of first year students and **80%** of seniors agree that Drake has helped them acquire a broad general education.
- Majority indicate that their education has helped them to form a personal code of values and ethics:
  – **60%** of first year students and **54%** of seniors.

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Mission and Data Driven Revision of the Engaged Citizen AOI

Responsible global citizenship Drake graduates understand that their individual knowledge and skills must be connected to the contributions of all cultures to the human experience. In practicing *engaged citizenship* they understand and exercise the individual freedoms and institutional responsibilities of a democratic society, and strive to sustain and expand the common good.

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Responsible Global Citizenship learning outcomes

Drake graduates:
- **Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of a society other than their own.**
- **Understand the impact that our nation and its cultures have on the larger global community.**
- **Engage in strategies to promote inter-cultural communication and conflict resolution.**
- **Assume responsibility for the common good of local, national, and global communities.**
- **Fulfill their responsibilities as citizens in a participatory democracy.**
- **Serve as active stewards of both the natural environment and the cultural heritage of society.**

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The Outcomes and NSSE questions

Understand others:
1.e. diverse perspectives
11.l. Understanding people of other backgrounds
Concern – 42% of seniors in 2006

Communication:
1. u. Conversations with students of a different race;
1.v. with different beliefs;
10.c. Contact among…different backgrounds

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The Outcomes and NSSE Questions

Common good
1.k. Participated in …service learning
Concern – 14% seniors in 2006
11.o. Contributing to the welfare of your community Concern – 39% seniors in 2006

Citizens
11.i. Voting in local, state, or national elections -- Concern – 31% seniors in '06

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Revision of the Engaged Citizen AOI: Learning Outcomes

Courses were revised and new courses created to meet these outcomes. Students will,
- Learn to evaluate the mix of diverse values and interests that influence democratic decision-making.
- Establish skills, knowledge, or dispositions that will lead them to be active stewards for the common good.
- Critically reflect on the social, economic, or political issues that they will face as citizens.
- Learn democratic practices or public engagement through participatory activities organized in the classroom and/or in the community."

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Engaged Citizen Workshop – Annually in May

- Faculty receive course development stipends of $1500 for workshop to share best practices in achieving the learning outcomes and course development
- New courses developed across disciplines
  - *Biology 145*: Disease, Dialogue, and Democracy
  - *English 83*: English in America: Language, the Citizen, and National Identity
  - *Environmental Science and Policy 50*: Poverty Development and the Environment
  - *Law, Politics, and Society 135*: Contemporary American Indian Law and Politics
  - *Psychology 134*: Ethnopolitical Conflict and Peacemaking

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Engaged Citizen Experience – blending curricular and co-curricular

- **Based on an issue that has local, national, and global significance and is intended to engage the entire community in co-curricular events on the theme.**
- **Chosen using input from students in the first year seminars**
- **Used to develop courses, co-curricular events, and events sponsored by student organizations.**

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ECE 08: *Voices of Democracy: Dissent and Dialogue*

- **Drake Students and the Caucuses:**
- "Only Connect: What Does It Mean to Be a Liberally Educated Person?" William Cronon,
- "Patriotism, Dissent, and Democratic Citizenship." Austin Sarat,
- "Towards a Democratic Culture: Faith, Politics and Justice." Ernesto Cortes, Jr., Southwest Regional Director for the Industrial Areas Foundation .
- **Student organized events included**
  - Domestic Workers United –speakers
  - What I Believe – faculty-student discussion
  - Blacks: Casualties of the War on Crime

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Culminating Event: Engaged Citizen Experience Town Hall Meeting

Student-led roundtable discussions of critical issues that they have studied in EC classes

-Tables with 6-10 members of the audience (students, faculty, staff, community members)

Topics
1. *Global Health and Engaged Citizenship*
2. *Alternative Religious Experiences in the Context of Civil Engagement*
3. *Black Christianity: From Pulpit to Politics*
4. *Class Differences in Reproductive Politics*
5. *Roll the Dice: The Question of Tribal Gaming*
6. *Religious Fundamentalism and Its Implications in American Politics*
7. *(Mis)Representation of the Hezbollah in the American Media*

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Engaged Citizen Experience 2009

Poverty, Development, and Social Responsibility: Whose World is it Anyway?

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Drake -- Next Steps

- NSSE in alternate years
- Use of NSSE to raise questions for pursuing more information
- Connection of NSSE to CLA
- Drake Curriculum Task Force – mission driven revision of entire Drake Curriculum
- Engaged Citizen Experience – focus groups

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Lessons Learned

❑ **Cultivate shared understanding of essential learning outcomes**

❑ **Be strategic in timing your use of NSSE**

❑ **Use data to raise questions, or to confirm or refute concerns about educational processes and goals**

❑ **NSSE data are only one source of information; multiple data points are essential**

❑ **Use standard NSSE reports but also reshape the data when needed to answer your specific questions.**

❑ **Share results widely, but provide a context for data**

Discussion & Application: LEAP and NSSE

- Considering your learning outcomes or general education goals, what could you examine using your NSSE data?
- How you might use NSSE or other measures on your home campus to leverage action, or bring about change on this outcome?
- If you are participating in the LEAP Campus Action Network: What might be helpful to your work?